



JAMES HATFIELD

AND THE

BEAUTY OF BUTTERMERE.

VOL. I.

T. C. Savill, Printer, 107, St. Martin's Lane.



*For stranger, gazed at the bottom of the hill, and stood close
before the lovely spirit he had addressed*

JAMES HATFIELD

AND THE

BEAUTY OF BUTTERMERE:

A Story of Modern Times.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS,

BY ROBERT CRUIKSHANK.

“I have great comfort from this fellow: methinks he hath no drowning mark upon him: his complexion is perfect gallows! Stand fast, good fate, to his hanging! Make the rope of his destiny our cable, for our own doth little advantage.”—*TEMPEST*.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:
HENRY COLBURN, PUBLISHER,
GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1841.

ADVERTISEMENT.

THE singular being to whom the following pages relate was, though a young man, a man of the world and a person also of education. So remarkable was he for his superiority of address and courtesy of manners, that he became a favourite in the numerous social circles into which he was admitted ; and had, consequently, frequent opportunities for exercising his talent at imposition.

Such were the somewhat equivocal accomplishments of this polite delinquent,—which, however, had the effect of exciting much interest in his behalf on his final apprehension ; and not the less on account of his being united to a village girl, well known on the spot of his later adventures, and remarkable for her personal attractions. She was, also, it should appear, a superior person for her

station in life, having been indebted for no mean education to a curate in the neighbourhood. As regards her personal recommendations in particular, she seems to have been as much an object of curiosity as was our adventurer, on his part, for polite imposture and accomplished scoundrelism. The names of Hatfield and “the Beauty of Buttermere,” as she was called, were in the mouths of every one; and the humble but picturesque haunts of Buttermere became another, though a ruder Clarens for the time—which was the earlier part of the present century; and endless was the throng of visitants who crowded thither.

The circumstances of the actual story have been recorded without any greater licence in deviating from their exactness, than such as may fairly be conceded to the colouring of romance. In approaching, however, the scenes in which the events took place, another and a different source of interest presents itself. When we call to mind that those scenes have aided the inspiration of a Coleridge, a Wordsworth, and a Southey, we feel that we are treading on classic ground.

The first mentioned of these names possesses indeed an increased claim to our interest, since it

lives hallowed, now, in the shrine of memory, and invites us to dwell with affectionate regret and veneration on the best and kindest qualities of the heart, and the loftiest attributes of the mind.

We are old and grey-headed now, but we can recal the period (it is that of our story) when, in the wild and picturesque scenes in question, the poet and metaphysician first shone upon the world in all the freshness of youthful fancy, and the ardour of imagination. That period has long passed away ; and we, therefore, turn with yet greater interest to those remarkable creations which emanated from his mind. Not the least striking of these is that of the Ancient Mariner, which we have sought to embody in one of the characters of our *dramatis personæ*, as a tribute claimed by the recollections to which we have just referred.

Nothing further seems required of us by way of Preface, unless it be to state, that the char-fishe is an actual portrait of a living original and a most worthy being.

ILLUSTRATIONS.

VOL. I.

	PAGE
THE STRANGER ARRIVED AT THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL	6
AND HERE HE STARTED, AS GERTRUDE HERSELF ENTERED THE ROOM	53

VOL. II.

OUR HERO NOW REINED IN HIS STEED HASTILY . . .	221
IN THEY RUSHED, ETC.	321

VOL. III.

SO SAYING, HE RAISED THE VEIL FROM THE FACE OF THE FIGURE	117
"THE PETITION," SAID THE PRINCE, "IS ALREADY GRANTED"	209

ADVENTURES

OF

JAMES HATFIELD.

CHAPTER I.

“ Follow, follow me !
In the depth of those beloved eyes
Still saw I, ‘ Follow me ! ’ ”

SHELLEY’S PROMETHEUS.

THE golden glow of sunset had mellowed in its lustre the yellow mosses of the Melbreak* ridge, and the orb was sinking beneath the height, when through its haze of glory was discerned a form bright as any vision which such a scene might have inspired in those gifted denizens of this lovely clime—a Wordsworth, a Coleridge, or a Southey. In the fulness of joy had the smiling year arrayed the scene and season. In the fulness of joy, too, had the summer light of youth arrayed the brow and illumined the heart of the fair being who now shewed herself, shrined as it were in

* Heights overlooking Buttermere to the westward.

the ruddy sunlight, on the brow of the hill. To witness her as she stood circled in the full lustre of that halo, she seemed as some beatified form lit up in the inspiration of a Raphael's pencil.

A youthful stranger, who was on his rambles through that wild and interesting region, had, in contemplating the features of the scene, found his glance attracted towards this object of loveliness above all others, even amidst a realm where the beauty and magnificence of nature abound. And, as the Houri charm sheds new enchantment over the blooming haunts of Eden, so this radiant figure centered in herself, for the present, the attractions of the spot; and well may we pause with the stranger to regard for a moment and admire the "lovely vision," as we had almost been inclined to term her.

She was of a figure where lightness and native grace were combined with all the activity and vigour that health and constant exercise impart. No languid delicacy of hue pined on her gladsome and beautiful, but sun-burnt cheek, the healthful bloom of which had enamoured the day-beam (to cite the fable) so much, that it had left the mark of its kisses there. The graceful loftiness of her neck made her appear rather taller than she really was. Her stature was not much above the middle height, and her small feet seemed to touch the earth as lightly

as the breeze that skimmed it. Of such sprightly ease was that gait, so airy that movement, so slender and light that ancle, the graceful pedestal of a stature so perfect, that a lover in his enthusiasm might have indeed deemed a spirit—a denizen of ethereal birth—had descended on earth before his gaze, and made him fear to intrude with his more profane step on ground which such lustre and charm had consecrated.

Such was the feeling of the youthful stranger who now stood spell-bound in the contemplation of so much loveliness; and whether his sight was more dazzled by the splendour of her presence, or the “glory-shrine” in which it was presented to him, he was unable to determine. His heart he could be sure was dazzled, and he watched for her descent from the hill that he might have the opportunity, or (to use a term more suited perhaps to his impatience) “snatch the happiness” of accosting her, in order to learn from her his way, which he had lost in rambling about the mountain mazes of the district.

Suddenly, however, he saw her stop in her descent, and raising a small horn to her lips, she sounded a shrill and clear note, and then turning the corner of the ridge, fled from his sight, and mocked him, as though indeed but a vision that had shone transiently before him to awaken admira-

tion and elude him. The disquiet with which he saw the purple-coloured hood she wore, floating in the breeze, vanish, as she lightly tripped round the hill brow, may be well imagined. He immediately hastened to pursue her track from the foot of the slope where he had surveyed her ; but after having toiled up the steep, he saw her at the further end of a long valley below, followed now by the kine which she had called together with the horn that he had just heard, and which he now remembered was not confined to Switzerland, but was common also in the mountains of Connemara in Ireland, and other mountainous districts.

He was for awhile overwhelmed with impatience and vexation at having thus lost this lovely "herd-mistress," (for such he took her to be,) and stood watching her track as it wound along the base of the ridge on which he stood, and which spread onward till it overhung the waters of Buttermere. The rude notes of the horn had challenged the herd to the hour of milking, as the day-beam had now waned, and the evening star—that Venus which might have served for an emblem of her own beauty—shone over her rustic but blissful task, and smiled on her as the divinest object it looked on.

At least, so thought the person who now stood watching her track, while, seeing that it wound in a direction towards the lake and at the back of the

ridge whence he looked, he began to entertain hopes that he might yet meet the object of his admiration. Nor was he disappointed, for on arriving at the bottom of the height, in the direction facing the lake, he beheld her now close at hand advancing at the head of the obedient herd. No form of rural loveliness that ever saw its beauties reflected in the pure Arethusan fountains it bent over was ever more beautiful. Never did Doric reed celebrate in its love-notes a sweeter theme for its rustic modulations.

She wore, beneath the mantle or short cloak already described, a bodice of the old Lincoln green colour, surmounted by a pink kerchief over her bosom. Her small fairy feet were shielded from the "rude flint" of the crag by a sort of short compact buskins, worn with the hair outside; and these, with a blue kirtle, completed a costume which no maiden of Saxony or the Swiss mountains might have disdained. This gear, though homely, was marked by neatness, and that grace which everything acquired on a form of so much lightness and movements so airy. They gave all she wore a better appearance than it possessed in itself; and not all the fictitious graces that art, that modes the most studied, or invention the most curious could dictate, would have added lustre to, or enhanced the charm in which nature, unadorned nature, had arrayed her.

CHAPTER II.

“The first mild touch of sympathy and thought.”

WORDSWORTH.

“MY beautiful creature,” exclaimed the stranger as he approached her, “would you direct me the way to the village? for I have lost my path in rambling about these wilds, and account myself happy in having found one who I think can set me right. I am sure,” he added to himself, “I could follow her guidance wherever she led me !”

In saying these words, the stranger arrived at the bottom of the hill, and stood close before the lovely object he had addressed, greeting her at the same time with a graceful inclination of the head, as he raised the travelling cap he wore from his brow. A certain excusable interest, no less than graceful deference, might have been detected as characterizing his inquiry, and shewed that the admiration he had conceived for this charming

mountain-maiden was as much expressed in his address, as any alleged desire of gaining the information he asked of her.

On her part, she knew not, at first, whether the air of distinction which characterized him, or the manly graces of his figure and handsome speaking countenance, possessed the worthiest claim on her attention. She did not, as is the case with many of her class in life, form her estimate of his right to her respect by his dress, which was of the plainest description, consisting of the travelling cap just mentioned as doffed in honour of herself, a riding coat of rough blue cloth, a plaid waistcoat, and trowsers of brown duck, coming down low over the instep of a pair of short-ankle boots, well calculated, from their thickness, for clambering over the rocky heights over which his rambles extended; indeed, a Cumberland peat-cutter or Flemish boor with his *sabots* might have viewed them with pardonable jealousy.

It is reasonable to suppose that the stranger's manner, engaging and deferential as we have described it, did not fail in tacitly interesting the fair mountaineer, who insensibly felt flattered by it as a compliment which she could not help being conscious was paid to the power of her charms. Independently of this, there was something so different in the style of address she now

experienced, to that she had been hitherto accustomed to meet from any of those rustic admirers who might have uttered their rude compliments to her, that the “novelty” of the stranger’s manner had no less effect in engaging her attention than any grace or distinction that marked it. In fact, she was at present addressed by one who to the polite air of the man of the world combined a complete (and possibly dangerous) understanding of the female character; and knew well how to flatter insensibly its worthy self-love, and sway its affections, too, in that marked respect and deference, tempered by a certain tenderness, which we have witnessed in him. Address, air, manner, they speak more than all the power of utterance or eloquence in the world.

And so the lovely mountain-maiden might have felt; yet notwithstanding the air of command which belonged naturally to him, notwithstanding, too, the habitual disguise of his thoughts and feelings,—he was unable, altogether, to conceal on the present occasion a certain degree of embarrassment, betrayed both in his countenance and utterance, and which may well be excused as the effect of those charms which had so powerfully, no less than suddenly, assailed him. This embarrassment did not detract, indeed, in the estimation of the fair herd-mistress from any interest inspired by his

address; on the contrary, it might have increased it, since it had the effect of betraying to her the secret of the influence her charms possessed over him. In effecting this, it restored to her, in no small degree, her confidence, and a certain becoming archness, which was not the least striking feature of interest in her manner, and which she had at first felt a little shaken by the awe with which the superior bearing of the stranger had impressed her. In fact, she was rendered sensible, to use the expression with which her rustic friends would have supplied her, “that the gentleman was as much afraid of *her* as she of *him* ;” or, in other words, that he stood no less in awe of her charms than she on her part could feel with respect to either his air of command or distinction of bearing. Accordingly, as the blush that like a transient gleam of light had played over her sunny cheek faded away, she raised her eyes, which had been for a moment cast down, on his countenance, as she archly made answer, with a smile, while the laughing graces of her reply rendered her yet more bewitching in his eyes—

“You must, indeed, Sir, be at a loss to find your way! since you cannot discover it while even the waters of the meer, on whose brink the village stands, shew themselves through the break of yonder ridge. Nay, the tower of the church can be seen

from the spot you were standing on a moment past; and the road winds down to the village from the height,—see, Sir,” (and here she pointed it out,) “shewing *itself*; and kindly saving a stranger the trouble of making inquiries as to its direction ! Not to discover a way so plain, shews indeed, Sir, you must have been at a loss.”

She was right, perhaps, in the exercise of her irony; for, in good truth, the stranger himself would have confessed that if he had not lost his way, he would have been glad to say that he had, as an excuse for opening a conversation with the object of his admiration. He replied, smiling in turn, as he fell into the track she took, and walked by her side, “Indeed, I must have been dull or blind, I suppose ! but, however, I esteem myself happy in my want of perception, since it has thrown me on your guidance. In truth, you may make some excuse for me, for after I had seen yourself, I had no eyes for any other object,—no thought for the pursuit of any other track than that which you follow !”

These words indeed evinced that all disguise of the interest with which she had inspired him was now willingly thrown aside. She laughed, however, as if not heeding the compliment, though the blush that again kindled in her cheek bespoke she was not altogether insensible of it, while she

replied hastily, "There, see ! you cannot mistake your way ; there is the church-tower now plainly apparent at the end of this hollow."

"The church-tower ! a happy omen, indeed, my beauty !" said the stranger, rallying in turn, and regaining now the air of composure he had felt half-ashamed at having so lately almost lost before the spell of charms so powerful. "The church-tower ! Many would say it was a happy omen that our first meeting should have been in sight of such an object. As if it admonished us we were destined for one another one of these days !"

She laughed at his raillery, while she banished from her mind the visions, not unpleasing indeed, which it had transitorily awakened, as she replied, "It is a pity, Sir, your compliments are not bestowed on some one they would be less lost upon than myself,—some one more credulous, and whose faith in omens is a little more strong ! There is many an humble village girl like myself, whom you may possibly find more —— superstitious."

"Indeed ! but I have known less probable auguries than this verified ere now, my charming herd-mistress," continued her admirer, in the same tone of chastened raillery, in which, however, there was no derogation from that air of respect which was the main secret of the influence his words possessed ; for though his fair comrade was indeed but

an "humble village girl," as she had herself expressed, yet she was neither without her pride nor possibly her reasons for keeping it in view. "You know not," continued the stranger, while he proceeded in a more serious tone than before, and with a significance that occasioned her to turn her eyes on his face with something like a look of inquiry. "You don't know what a person may be, or what his condition or circumstances, by his mere outward appearance."

"We cannot know people on a first acquaintance you should rather say, Sir," (tempering her former archness with a somewhat graver air also;) "for humble person as I am, you are not the first gentleman out of the many I have seen as visitants to these lakes, and therefore I cannot mistake you for any other than you are."

The stranger involuntarily bowed his head, and was silent a moment; and something like a sigh escaped him as he continued—

"The world, circumstances, the misfortunes of many, the adventure of some, often occasion people variously to assume shapes and characters that do not belong to them. The poor man, for instance, though of superior mind and feelings, is obliged to play a part and appear of better condition than he is, in order to gain respect from the world and worldlings; while the rich man, on the other hand,

is often disguised under the meaner array of seeming poverty. So again the man of genius, more really wealthy in his mental store than the paltry minion whose worldly parade is his only claim to respectability, is often disregarded and despised from the humility of his appearance. The knave, the swindler, the man who lives by dishonest acts," (and here his voice was raised and his manner became more impassioned,) "often, meantime, bears about him the appearance of distinction, and imposes on the world he perhaps despises and secretly rejoices in making his dupe!"

"Yes, Sir, all this is no doubt true," she replied, "and in your placing before me the arts by which some men disguise their characters, you confirm me in the opinion you led me to express,—excuse me, Sir,—of yourself, as regards appearances; for no one but a gentleman surely could express himself or think and feel as you have suggested. Therefore, Sir, though you might choose to entertain yourself by the compliments you paid me a moment ago, be assured they do not blind me to the sense of my own situation, and the distance that exists between——"

"What a clever, delightful creature she is!" interrupted the stranger to himself, surprised at finding so much propriety of sentiment and superiority of expression in an humble village girl.

“ You have a good school, I suppose, in the village?” he asked.

“ No, there is none. There is one at Keswick, which is not far off.”

“ You have had the benefit of some education? Assuredly you must! Did you go to Keswick?”

“ No! I am indebted for my education (a better one, I think, than I should have gained, perhaps, at a village school) to a clergyman of the neighbouring parish of Lorton, where he still resides, and where I was for some time brought up when a child.”

“ The parish of Lorton !” said the stranger, with an interest he was unable to suppress. “ What is the clergyman’s name?—is he a curate?—had he any child?” were the questions he asked hurriedly.

She gazed on him now with surprise, as she answered his questions as briefly as his anxiety seemed to demand.

“ He had no children that I remember,—yes, I believe he had a son; but he died abroad. He is a curate, and poor.” . . .

. . . “ But his name?—his name?” . . .

“ Fenton.”

“ Good God !” exclaimed the stranger, and was nearly sinking back, so much so that, had he not supported himself by a rude mountain-ash bough that protruded itself from the bankside, he would,

in all probability, have fallen. He soon, however, came to himself, and resumed his self-possession, as he replied to her inquiry "whether he knew Mr. Fenton?"

"No, no,—that is,—I have heard of him. A good man, and struggling, as I have been informed, with difficulties."

"He is, indeed, a good man. I do not speak from his kindness to myself alone! He was ever the father of the unfortunate, the destitute, in his parish; or, I may say, the whole country round. His means would not afford him the power of doing much; but he ever shared his little—he ever 'broke his crust'—with the sufferer that asked aid of him."

"Ill recompensed as excellent being! I knew—that is, I mean," replied the stranger, evading the conclusion to which his first words promised to lead, "I mean to say," he continued, half speaking to himself, and half to her, "that the instance of Mr. Fenton is a melancholy illustration of the unworthy recompence with which so many of our more exemplary workers in his vocation are visited! . . . But we are now near the village; it is close, I see, at hand," he added abruptly to his fair comrade.

She had been insensibly so much engrossed by the interest awakened in her mind from the circumstance of her early friend and educator, Mr.

Fenton, being known (as it should appear) to the stranger, that she had involuntarily permitted herself to continue in the same path with him, without considering about the observation that might possibly be drawn upon her in consequence of being seen walking side by side with a gentleman into the village. She therefore took advantage of a turning which led by a rather more circuitous track than the one before them into the village, and telling the stranger that "*this* was *her* way, while his own he could not mistake," she bade him good evening, and was preparing to leave him, when he said—

"What! will you not let me accompany you into the village? I had many things to ask you about the spot."

"Of all those, Sir, you will be able to gain information on your arrival there. . . . So come, Fan! come, Rossette!" she exclaimed, calling to her truant cattle, as she again proceeded to turn away.

"But can you not," continued her interrogator, wishing to detain her, "can you not recommend me to any inn where I can be accommodated?"

"None in particular, Sir. The few that there are, are all equally humble."

"But I think I have heard of one near the border of the lake, where the celebrated Beauty of Buttermere is to be seen,—eh? though, indeed, I

shall be surprised to find her lovelier than yourself."

"I can scarcely say which that inn may be," she replied, hastily, as she turned aside her face to conceal the smile that on some account or another the above inquiry occasioned, while she added, "There is certainly one inn that is held in more estimation than the rest, as commanding a better view of the lake; but this you will readily find when you reach the village,—but see!" she added, "my cows are straying from the path; so I must bid you good evening once again, Sir!"

Saying these words, she tripped lightly up the bank before the stranger could utter another word to protract the conversation, while she called again to the two or three truant kine that had wandered from the track. They were soon summoned by her challenge, and also by the signal of the horn which she again wound; and having brought them back to the ranks, she pursued her way, while the stranger stood looking after her as the music of her voice still vibrated on his heart, and the radiance of her countenance still beamed in delightful vision before him. He remained fixed to the spot, though the turning in the ridge had now hidden the lovely herd-mistress from his view; and some moments had elapsed ere he roused himself to proceed, as he stood dwelling on her image. When

he was at length roused, it was at the thought of her mention of "the good Mr. Fenton," as he was deservedly designated throughout the neighbourhood.

The spell of her beauty at once vanished (for a time at least) from his senses at this thought. It seemed as though the lash of the furies had stung him to the heart as he started and proceeded forward with unequal pace, now hurried and now more slow, betokening the agitation of his mind, while "a change" had come over his countenance as darkly as over "the spirit of his dream."

CHAPTER III.

“ You are well overtaken ! I shall, by your favour, bear you company as far as Theobalds,”

IZAAB WALTON.

THE reflections that agitated the stranger we shall, by and by, have an opportunity of expressing ; at present they were momentarily suspended by his finding himself now at the entrance of the village, and he stood awhile hesitating to pass its threshold, as it were unable to make up his mind to finish his ramble, so beautiful was the evening, and inviting him in its calm persuasion to linger abroad a short time longer ere he housed him for the night. The reflection of the sunset glow shed its burning lustre over the meer, and lit it up in one broad sheet of ruddy gold, putting him in mind of the “ red gold ” that glitters in our old ballads, so gorgeously was it arrayed in its wide mantle of crimson. At length he turned listlessly round, and wandered slowly down to the water’s edge, pursuing

his stroll along the bank, and seeming for an interval beguiled of his bitterer thoughts, and deriving pleasure from a contemplation of the beauty of the scenery and the loveliness and repose of the lake, which, slumbering as it did amidst the wild and craggy grandeur of the heights that form its barrier, well illustrated Byron's picture of "Beauty lying in the lap of Terror."

. . . "What scenes of happiness," he thought to himself, "exist, if our minds and feelings were not so warped by circumstances as to render us unable to enjoy them—nay, force us to feel that those scenes in their very cheerfulness do but mock us. To *me* . . . my life appears one hideous dream, whose fears I scarce dare relate to the solitude here around me!—hunted, pursued from the haunts of men under a fatal charge,—'frighted' almost at my own shadow, in my too just surmises that the myrmidons of 'doom' are waylaying me,—compelled to exist under one perpetual disguise!" . . .

He paused a moment, and sat down by a rock that bowed over the water, and looked on that tranquil wave and scene with a mingled sense of admiration at their beauties, and regret that it was forbidden *him* to share the repose to which they invited. He was not insensible of the mild influence of the soft air as it came on gentle pinions float-

ing over the waters that undulated harmoniously with it ;—but that blissful communication of peace spread not to *him*. Vainly the breeze fanned his burning forehead with its cool wing—it poured no refreshing balm over the anguished spirit of *his* “unrest.” Vainly the charm of that seclusion smiled for *him* along those tranquil banks. He felt himself an invader of the calm sanctuary which nature had dedicated to repose, shrining her amidst those majestic heights, those russet banks, those placid waters around him. He seemed to hear the chiding whispers of the spirit of the scene and of the waters reproach him, and ask, “What so turbid and unhallowed a spirit as *his* did there?” In that whisper God seemed to repudiate and convict him no less than man.

“How different is the tumult *within*,” he thought, “to all this luxury of repose without. Oh ! it were happiness this moment to finish this anguish of the soul by sinking into that peaceful flood, and find in its calm depths an oblivion of all the vexatious spirit-stir that renders life a hell !” Then looking round him, he continued, “If a retreat of safety is to be sought anywhere, I should deem it might be here. This spot seems shut out from the world, and the disguise I wear, as regards my name and history, with the caution to be observed in retiring from the presence of those who may visit the spot, ought, I think, to be the means

of security; for to *this* spot—to the remembrances of my childhood—I am coerced—urged by a sort of fate—it may be, a fatality! I might have escaped to a foreign shore,—I might have sailed for America, or to the French coast; but some destiny for good or for evil whispered to me, and irresistibly, to come hither!” And his thoughts now recurring to the subject of Fenton and the character the fair herd-mistress had given of him, he exclaimed, “He is then the same kind and indulgent ‘friend and father’ of all around him that he ever was. . . . I yearn to go to him—to ask his forgiveness for the wrong of an earlier day, to own to him that I am No! no! Gracious God, no! Why should I contaminate his fair name with the impurity, the disgrace, that attaches to my own—at least, the name that, erewhile, passed for my own. I cannot! I must not! If I could be sure of escape—of security from detection—of freedom—why *then* I might gratify such an inclination. Eventually I might; but at present, I fear it is impossible! Impossible!” he repeated the word aloud in a sort of mental agony, where all struggle of doubt seemed despairingly overcome by the painful prospect of some doom, the contemplation of which at once excited his anguish, remorse, and shame; and which he might attempt indeed to evade, yet with but precarious hopes of success.

Scarcely had the sound escaped his lips before

he was startled by a footstep, and looking round he perceived a person with a fishing-rod and landing-net, and other implements of angling, coming towards him, followed by a liver-coloured water-spaniel, which he called Bryan. Any one who had seen the stranger's face a moment before, and had witnessed the deep and passionate workings of anguish, shame, and alarm portrayed in it, would scarcely have believed they beheld the same person when they saw the appearance of serenity that now again took possession of his countenance as he looked up in the face of the angler who approached him, and, while he maintained his seat on the rock, answered the other's salutation with an inclination of the head and a smile. In fact, suspicion was baffled in his presence by that calmness and mingled dignity, that cheerful and easy frankness of manner, which he habitually wore, and which, if it had not even been natural to him, (which it was in an eminent degree,) would have been rendered a second nature by that vigilant exercise of it, which was no less expedient to throw suspicion off its guard, than it was agreeable to all who were brought in contact with him. To look at the stranger, and imagine from his appearance, address, and bearing, that he was capable of a dishonourable or guilty action was impossible.

“A lovely evening this for fishing,” he said,

“and I dare say you have had a good day’s sport, though I should think the water a little too clear just here for the trout to rise readily at the fly.”

The angler was pleased to find from this remark that he had fallen in (as he imagined) with one who appeared initiated in the mysteries of the angle, of which he was himself a devoted professor. He was no light, romantic stripling visiting these wilds with the accompaniment of his angle rod; on the contrary, his appearance indicated that he was past the middle age considerably, and his figure and bearing were rather calculated to inspire a feeling of drollery than any other sensation. He was, in a word, of a short, porsy stature, and waddled in his gait, or rather “jolted” forward, (it may be said,) the rotundity of figure he bore in front well illustrating what Homer calls in the *Odyssey*, “capacious caverns” in the corpulency of his goodly person. He panted like a decoy-fowler’s spaniel of the fens (or his own trusty Bryan beside him), fighting his way through the stiff sedge and weeds of the bank as he drives the ducks before him. Our angler’s stumpy legs and rotund figure gained an additional clumsiness of appearance from the short small-clothes and tight gaiters which exhibited in exact symmetry those substantial “logs” which he called “legs.” The little bulk of his upper man was as closely incased as

the lower, and becomingly set off in a short velveteen shooting-jacket, which, when flung open, exhibited, as if in emulation of the ruddy orb itself of day, the crimson rotundity of his waistcoat bulging over a person that forced it out to its full tension. To regard it, you would imagine it must burst asunder; but this consequence was prevented by the proud resistance of a row of sugar-loaf gilt and chased buttons, which, glowing over this capacious eminence of crimson, arrayed it in additional lustre. A coloured kerchief girt the throat of the little Doctor, (so was he called, having taken out a Scotch diploma of "M.D.,") and with a straw broad-brimmed hat on his head, thus arrayed and accoutred, he used to sally forth on his favourite excursion of angling, his range being between Crumnock, Buttermere, and Keswick, which last place was his head-quarters.

The portrait of Dr. Esdaile (such was his name) would be scarcely complete without a sketch of his countenance in addition. This, at a general view, you would pronounce very much like a large, swelling and steaming, round plum-pudding; for the honest ruddy brown of its ground, and the freckles that spangled it, made it look for all the world just like the above-mentioned joyous Christmas fare, studded with its countless plums. Add to this, a little snub nose, dabbed like an effigy of

putty upon the face, a pair of scanty red whiskers, and good-humoured, small, light blue eyes, and you have the Doctor before you to the very life.

Such was the appearance of this medical and piscatorial oddity; yet there was no one who, after conversing with him, did not like him, and feel sensible of the influence of that good-humour which his countenance promised, and his cheerfulness of manner subsequently confirmed.

“You say truly,” he replied to the stranger’s remark; “the water is much too clear just here; and nothing but a net will ever secure a char or trout in this part of the meer.”

“A char? What, then, this is the renowned prey you seek in this water? I did not know it was an inhabitant of this lake.”

“Yes it is; but not so fine as in Coniston.* Do not imagine, however, I have been wasting my time in trying to hook a fish in the meer itself,—no, no;—it is in yonder little stream† that runs into it just at that creek, that I have been plying my angle, and with what success you shall judge.”

So saying, Doctor Esdaile, while he placed his tackle down, and bid Bryan crouch down in the

* In this lake the finest char are found: those of Ullswater are the lowest in repute. The waters also of Windermere, Wastwater, Crumnock, and Buttermere, contain them.

† In this stream is the famous fall of Scale Force.

sedge by the side of it, deliberately wiped his brow with a capacious brown silk handkerchief, and seated himself on the bank near his new acquaintance.

This person at once found the way to his heart, by appearing to take a deep interest in the subject of the char, which now the Doctor proceeded to exhibit with all the pride felt by the captor and conqueror of so wily and difficult a prey. And we may here observe, that one of the arts of the stranger was to make all he fell in with pleased with him. "He glided," as Dryden says, "unfelt into their secret hearts." Like Alcibiades, (though in a more contracted sphere of action,) he adapted himself, with consummate address and natural ease, to all tastes, and was uniformly a favourite with all whom he had ever encountered—except, indeed, it need scarcely be added, those whom he had wronged,—those few whom peril and necessity compelled him to avoid, (as we have been enabled at least to glean from the avowal that has been overheard to escape him,) in such retreats of security as that which he now hoped he had discovered.

Another art he possessed was that of discerning at a glance almost, the character of the person, whoever he might be, with whom he came in contact. Self-preservation rendered such discrimination necessary, though, on the present occasion, he was glad to feel there was not much need of its exercise; for he

was satisfied that there was little danger to be apprehended from the companionship of the good-humoured Doctor ; and as he surveyed this worthy himself with a grin of satisfaction, in opening the perforated tin box which held the fish, in order to exhibit the trophies of his sport, he could not help regarding him with something like a smile of contempt,—it might be compassion,—to think that a being existed who appeared to have no care in the world beyond the anxiety of securing a good day's amusement with his angle rod !

“ There !” said the Doctor, giving forth his whole soul in the monosyllable. “ There !” he said, exultingly producing a splendid fish from the wet mosses that the box was inlaced with like a water-fowl's lair, dashed with the dews of the river that hurries past. “ Now, just look !—that is a fish that will do your eyes good to dwell on !”

“ A couple of pound weight at least ?”

“ Yes ; and the char seldom exceed that in either the meer here, or the brook in which I have been fishing. But if you admire it as it looks in *propriis naturalibus*, which means *undressed*, and without any sauce but the dews of the brook on it, what will you say when you see it teeming and steaming invitingly before you in the savoury richness of sauces aiding its own flavour ! It were a banquet for Epicurus ! Imagine it, my dear Sir,” exclaimed the

little Doctor, warming in his enthusiasm, and exhibiting to the stranger's amusement another trait in his character, namely, that of gastronome, in addition to that of angler, "Imagine it, I say, inviting the impatience of your palate to luxuriate in its richness—the rare combination—the mingled sweetness and delicacy of the fish, aided by the exciting piquancy of the sauce I hope to put to it. Oh! the palate tingles at the thought!" And the little convivialist was well nigh capering in ecstasy at the savoury images his gourmandise conjured up; while his companion could not suppress a laugh as he replied—

"Upon my word, you must excuse me for being a little surprised to hear you thus eloquent on a theme, no doubt very inviting, but not such as I had imagined the contemplations of anglers had usually embraced! I had fancied that all brothers of the angle were of the contemplative school, and confined their dreams to the philosophy and quiet self-commune which the genius of solitude inspired amidst the pensiveness and tranquillity of sequestered brooks and shadowy banks . . . where the hollow sound of falling waters, the hum of insects floating through the lambent lustre of azure air, or the tinkling of sheep bells over the distant heath, alone broke the grateful silence!" . . .

"Capital! capital!" interrupted the little Doc-

tor, laughing with all his characteristic goodhumour at his companion's irony, as the latter proceeded in the same vein. . . .

. . . "Not to mention all those pretty reflections suggested by the fish catching the bait, just as worldlings do the lures and baits of vanity!—with a host of other equally seductive—or, if you please, sedative—dreams. Add to this, the sad compunction, all the while you are torturing the fish, that you are so compelled to lacerate the poor thing's jaws for your own amusement!"

. . . "Hold, hold, my friend, there you are mistaken, and must absolve me and my brethren of this compunctious whimpering and real cruelty! For know, Mr. Satirist, that loving the dear fry too much to hurt them, I am happy at thinking that they feel no pain from my hook, which sticks in the leathery substance of the mouth, where no nerves are, and consequently no pain!"

"Well said! I am glad to hear such is the case, and can now give the 'gentle angler' credit for somewhat less cant than I had hitherto been inclined to attach to him!"

"To be sure! to be sure! You will find us brothers of the angle no such 'placid tormenters' as you imagined; and with respect to 'contemplative habits,' on which you descanted in such brave terms a moment past, why, I may say, 'so I am fond of

contemplation !—very fond ; though, I am willing to own, that my piscatorial musings have generally a hankering after those savoury prospects which I just now portrayed, and which I hope, ere the day closes, to witness agreeably realized ! As for the philosophy merely, and reflection that ‘ shadowy brooks, murmuring falls,’ &c. inspire, I leave these to the more sublime votarists of Messrs. Izaak Walton, Cotton, & Co.”

“ I see you are an ‘ original’ amongst the angling fraternity,” observed his companion, smiling.

“ Assuredly I am no ruminating or, at least, ‘ patient angler’ as Pope says, but a very *impatient* one—very eager to catch my game by all the lures of black gnat, dun, may, and palmer fly ; and for a ground bait, a grasshopper or cad are my delight. You are an angler yourself?” added the little man, looking up in the stranger’s face with a broad grin.

“ Oh yes !—a little,” was the reply.

“ Well said ! I thought so. We’ll have a day’s fishing, then, together. But that we will arrange in due time,” . . . continued the little man, busy now in replacing his fish in the tin box. . . .

“ Are they not beauties ! . . . No, no !” he proceeded a moment after, “ I am no ‘ dreamer’ whilst I have an angle rod in my hand ; and I will confess my exercise of it is not so much for the mere amuse-

ment of the 'gentle craft' as the luxurious char repast I look forward to as its reward ! . . . And what, pray," added the *bon vivant* with a *naïve* look of inquiry, "should a man come to this place for, unless it were for this?"

His companion could not forbear another smile. "Oh!" he calmly replied, "a dish of char is a very desirable thing, and which, no doubt, would whet a man's appetite for a visit to the lakes. However, I will plead guilty to not having thought of this in my wanderings hitherto, which were merely to enjoy the lake scenery—"

"Until I taught you better; come, confess it. Oh, I am glad you have fallen in with me ! What matters the 'outside' of the lake, or the beauties of scenery, if you can't have some agreeable recreation after your fatigue? The lack of which, many, I can promise you, have experienced in their unwary and too adventurous rambles. Fine scenery is doubtless a fine thing ! fine thoughts, too, are mighty sublime and divine ; but a fine well-dressed char—every other contemplation vanishes at the thought ! So, *via ! presto !* let us to the village. If you admire their rich ruddy tint," added the facetious little man, as he opened the gills of one of his victims, "as you see them now, what will you say when they are cooked ? when (as I shall shew you) no Maltese orange, with its rich

crimson glow, can surpass them. Come ! my way is towards the village ; and yours—”

“ Is in that direction too. I am passing on my way through, merely.”

“ Might I make bold to ask if you have any particular destination ? Indeed, there is but one decent inn in the place.”

“ No indeed ! I shall proceed to some inn—I believe it is one looking on the meer. I expect some baggage to be sent for me there, and then am uncertain when I shall proceed.”

“ So you *are* bound for the inn, then ? I esteem myself happy in being able to conduct you there. At no place can you be better accommodated than the ‘ Traveller’s Rest ;’ and if you will afford me the pleasure of your society, I may beg in return that you will satisfy your curiosity in tasting the char, which you will not, perhaps, have a better opportunity of doing in your way through this region, to which they belong almost exclusively. We should always,” continued the Doctor, with a merry grin and most important air, “ always honour the festive charter of any place through which we pass.”

“ Assuredly,” interposed the stranger, smiling ; “ and I never pass through Banbury without remembering its cakes, — through Burton without quaffing a draught of its ale, — through Epping

without regaling myself with a chicken well flanked with its sausages,—and uow—”

—“ You are acting with laudable consistency in doing honour to the char of the meer !” interposed his companion, laughing, as they proceeded walking side by side, and had now reached the village, followed by Bryan. . . . “ I shall be most happy,” he added, “ to join you ; and if I mistake not, the sign floating in the air that comes up so refreshingly from the water should be the spot of our destination.”

In fact, so it was. A few paces more brought them in front of the “ Traveller’s Rest,” to which pretty little hostelry the Doctor hastened his step in eager anticipation of the savoury joys in which his soul was now centered ; while the stranger paused to take one more view of the lovely waters of the meer, and the rich foliage along its margin, that seemed to dream over the wave through the softened light of evening ; and he then followed his companion slowly to the threshold.

CHAPTER IV.

“Come, hostess, dress it presently . . . and thanks be to honest, pretty Maudlin.”

IZAAK WALTON.

THE “Traveller’s Rest” did not take a designation inappropriate to the character it really possessed ; in which respect it was laudably dissimilar to the instances of sundry more modern specimens of domestic architecture which parade in their fronts the alluring title “Belle Vue Terrace,” where nothing is to be seen but a dead wall ; or “Mount Paradise,” or “Pleasant Row,” where nothing presents itself more “elevated,” in the one instance, than a heap or two of rubbish, scattered in unseemly confusion over “ground let on building leases,” — or more “pleasant” in the other than a brick-kiln, regaling the neighbourhood with its perpetual tribute of smoke, stench, and suffocation. Unlike, again, the “self-recommending” attribute which may be witnessed, for

example, in those volumes whose chief claim to attraction is in the flourish of the title-page, the "Traveller's Rest" did not belie the promise held out by its frontispiece, by any defalcation of good cheer and accommodation, on an experiment being made of its internal economy. Tantalizing, indeed, would it have been if such defalcation had existed; for the "outward sign," the pictorial "frontispiece," was most "inviting," and suggested the blandest associations of recruit and repose. In it you might witness, portrayed by the village Ostade, the figure of an honest wayfarer seated beneath a canopy, copied from the porch of the little inn itself, while the rural interest of the scene was heightened by a back-ground of the Borrodale hills, where the moon sailing "high in æther" (whose "subcerulean," by-the-bye, was somewhat washy,) sufficiently indicated, after the sublime fashion of Hogarth, the late period to which the said wayfarer had protracted his rambles previously to courting repose. The smoke, meantime, from his pipe certainly rendered it doubtful whether the moon was intended to shine clear and unsullied, or whether that splendid effect was to be produced of which the renowned Sylvester Daggerwood was so ambitious, when he paraded in his prospectus of scenery, amongst other effective items in his playbill—"the moon behind a cloud!"

Such was the scene in the outworks or prosce-
nium of our theatre of repose ; and swinging as it
did, not on a single post, but suspended between
two, might have awakened certain unpleasant
ideas of a gallows in the minds of those who were
thievishly or feloniously inclined ; consequently,
like Selden's distich* over his door, it warned away
all nefarious characters by this significant memento,
no less impressively than it invited all worthy
" lieges" to march into the porch and seek the
recruital the house afforded. Of course it is not
meant to insinuate that ideas so disagreeable sug-
gested themselves to either of the persons now be-
fore the hostlerie, or even if it were possible they
could have so arisen, yet the smiling neatness,
prettiness, and order of the house itself and its
frontage of garden, would have been sufficient
to dissipate them.

The porchway, which was deep, and fitted with a
rude bench on either side for the swains that regaled
them there, was canopied over with the clustering ex-
uberance of the convolvulus, white, pink, and violet-
streaked, whose tendrils drooped down over the arch

* " Gratus, honeste mihi non claudar inito sedequē,
Fur abeas non sum facta soluta tibi."

The reader may see this distich, carved by the hand of Selden,
over the door of the cottage where he was born, at the village
of Savington, in Sussex.

in front, and straggling into the interior of the porch, partially roofed it as well. Over the walls of the house the vine and an ancient pear-tree with a massive rugged stem formed a rich mantle in front; and over the sides the verdure of the hop luxuriated and wove its way in at the casements, while half way up the wall the yellow and crimson nasturtium also ran. The garden, which surrounded in its lively sweep the whole circuit of the house, was chiefly extended at its back ; and, here, along the walls of the lower rooms, there was a verandah of green painted trellis-work, festooned over with the China-rose and woodbine, and to which access was given from the house by a glass door. From the verandah you stepped upon a bowling-green, on which it was luxury to set foot, so soft and velvet-like was it. A Persian poet, in speaking of a piece of lawn such as this, calls it "soft as silk." We Europeans are satisfied with the more common "velvet" simile, which expresses the notion of smoothness better than all the silk in a sultan's wardrobe. At the end of this verdant carpet, a venerable mulberry-tree on one side, and a huge walnut-tree on the other, afforded a canopy where many a rustic meeting was held, and many a friendly contest at skittles or bowls instituted.

As a boundary to this lawn, and the garden toge-

ther with it, a brook urged its course, heightening the rural charm and peaceful spell of the spot by the rude murmur of its babblings. The truant stream brawled along, urging its headlong course over huge slabs of black rock, and forming many a cascade as you regarded its far progress from the hills behind, till it swept past along the level—a native rambler, that not even the “Traveller’s Rest” could persuade to stay or slacken its pace. From its margin the iris and water-lily looked on themselves in the crystal mirror of the flood, while the rude stream dashed the long lily tresses about with its wanton current, though the flowers smiled on its rudeness the while, as they tinted with their reflected hues its clear translucent surface.

Perhaps now and then the merry voices of the players at bowls would startle the moorhen, where it lurked amidst the yellow osier stems and rich luxuriant sedge that fringed the bank ; or some stray bittern, it might be, would spring forth, mingling (delightful discord !) its shrill cry with the laugh of the rustic revellers, and the rude minstrelsy of the pipe, tabor, or viol, that provoked the dance over the sward. And then the flower-borders with which the lawn was encompassed, what studious neatness did they exhibit ! “Surely some more than ordinarily cunning hand had shaped and superintended them,” thought the

stranger, as he glanced round on them. There the good old-fashioned sunflower, (old-fashioned now, but not at the time of which we speak,) the carnation, balsam, rose, and sweet-william, combined with many a shrub, and many a humble flowret—heart's-ease, and bachelor's button, and violet, and lily of the valley—to add beauty to the spot and balm to the air.

If such was the picture of rural repose, neatness, and charm, that the exterior of the Traveler's Rest presented, it was well supported by that which its internal economy now exhibited to the stranger, whose attention it excited more than the little Doctor's, the latter having been a constant visitor at the hostelrie on many a previous char-fishing and eating expedition.

"A delightful little inn, indeed!" said the stranger, as he entered a small and comfortable room called "the parlor," at the back of the house, and looking upon the verandah and bowling-green just described. Into this apartment "of honour" the companions were ushered by the landlady, Mrs. or "Dame" Wetherby, as she was called in the village.

"Excessively neat!" continued the stranger to Dr. Esdaile, as he glanced round the apartment, "and evidently bears marks of good housewifery! It is surely indebted to some more eminent hand

for this quiet effect, nay, even elegance of its arrangement, I might say, than is ordinarily to be traced in these rustic ‘hospitia!’ No coloured daubs on the walls of shepherdesses, in black and gilt frames,—no spun-glass poodles, and miniature wooden flower-pots. There is a chaste neatness and taste prevailing that it surprises me to meet!”

“Ay, this is Gertrude’s doing, our landlady’s fair daughter; is it not, Mrs. Wetherby?” replied the Doctor, turning to the “good woman” of the house, who was arrayed in a formidable widow’s cap, which looked like the ruff of a Poland hen, or a crested white-mackaw. Mrs. Wetherby acknowledged the compliment by a curtsy, though it struck the stranger that its demeanour was rather marked by stiffness than complaisance, while she replied at the same time, addressing herself to him, that “she was glad the gentleman found himself comfortable;” and then proceeded, to Dr. Esdaile’s infinite satisfaction, to the important topic of the “arrangement” for dinner of the char, which the Doctor had consigned, tin box and all, to her hand as he had entered the hostelry.

“Would you please to have the large brace dressed, Sir, or—”

“Oh! by all means, the larger brace, and a small one or two as well, that Mr. —, I beg your pardon,” he continued, turning to the stran-

ger, "I have not the honour of knowing your name."

"Colonel* Renmore," was the reply, accompanied by a bow; and if he seems somewhat young for a Colonel, we shall not marvel at this, when we hear it in due time explained.

"And mine, Dr. Esdaile, at your service, Colonel," continued the merry little man, who, by-the-bye, was never in such good spirits as when he was discussing that *cordon sanitaire* of his own, the arrangement of his favourite char. "Well, I was going to say, Mrs. Wetherby, that we should give Colonel Renmore a specimen of the quality of both the larger and smaller fish,—for they differ often very much, Colonel, I can assure you," he added, with an air of ludicrous seriousness that called forth a smile on the lip of his companion.

"Then the large brace, Sir, and two small ones?"

"Ay,—or three small ones, say," observed the Doctor with continued gravity.

"And dressed as you had them last time, or—"

"Oh, precisely," interposed anxiously our epicurean Doctor. "And let me inform you, Colonel," he continued, turning to Renmore, "that if you admire the taste with which Gertrude, (I beg

* That is, "Lieut.-Col." The name of the family *really* assumed is of course suppressed.

pardon, Mrs. Wetherby,) Miss Wetherby, I ought to say, has decorated or dressed the room, the garden, and all in fact you see around you, you will hold her good taste in yet higher estimation when you perceive how she can dress the char! you will pronounce this the perfection of that ‘arrangement’ that has hitherto so laudably struck you. Eh, Mrs. Wetherby,—what do you say?”

In reply to this testimony of the merits of Gertrude’s cooking, amongst her other accomplishments, Colonel Renmore observed, as he smiled at the eulogistic Doctor, and made a courteous inclination of the head to Mrs. Wetherby, “that he required no further proof of her daughter’s good taste to convince him of it, than the many testimonies he had already witnessed.”

“You won’t say so, though, when you taste the char! will he Mrs. Wetherby?”

The landlady of the Traveller’s Rest, with another curtsey marked with the same stiffness as had struck her new guest in her former one, again acknowledged the compliment paid to her daughter’s proficiency, while she replied to the merry Doctor,

“It is for me only to say that it is my daughter’s duty to make everything as comfortable as may be in the house for the gentlemen that are under my roof; and if her cooking gives satisfaction I am happy. And pray, Sir, when should you like to dine? now, or somewhat later?”

“Oh, now! by all means!” exclaimed the Doctor, in perfect pain at the thought of any more protracted delay than was necessary in reaching the “Promised Land,” the Canaan of his day’s fishing peregrination. “I am as hungry as a long day’s sport and ramble can make me, as I dare say you are too, Colonel?” looking inquiringly and with somewhat of ludicrous ruefulness in the face of Renmore for sympathy as regarded the state of his appetite.

“Indeed I shall not be at all sorry when dinner is ready.”

“That’s right! I thought so! You looked fatigued, I thought, when I first saw you. . . . Dinner as soon as possible, Mrs. Wetherby, if you please.”

The landlady of the Traveller’s Rest accordingly withdrew to obey the Doctor’s recommendation of having dinner on table, and with as little delay as possible; while during the purgatory which he was doomed to experience until that looked-for period should arrive, himself and Renmore strolled out at the glass-door already mentioned on the lawn, to admire all that we have above described, and which reflected Gertrude’s good management in the order and neatness it exhibited.

They strolled along towards the side of the brook, whose peaceful babblings challenged the rustic echoes of the spot; pausing now and then to

admire some shrub or flower in the parterres that were distributed on either side the lawn.

"A very decent, respectable looking dame our hostess," observed Renmore, in a sort of half-inquiry concerning Mrs. Wetherby, "but somewhat demure!"

"A religious twist, my dear Sir! a religious twist!" replied the Doctor, shrugging up his shoulders with a gesture of ludicrous dismay. "Oh, and such a prosaic personage when she mounts upon her hobby of pious or rather evangelical reflection, that I am always glad to make my escape as fast as I can—"

"Upon your own hobby—the angle rod?" rejoined his companion, smiling.

"Indeed I am! or on any hobby rather than worthy Dame Wetherby's; she rides it so pertinaciously, a witch's broomstick is light and airy, a winged Pegasus, compared to it."

"Why, where has she caught these solemn shadows of the spirit, this evangelical twist? which now perfectly account to me for the demureness which I perceived the moment she spoke. A characteristic, too, which appeared the more marked when reference was made to her daughter. Nay, if I mistake not, it assumed the feature almost of displeasure."

"Why the good dame has, I think, had her

head turned a good deal by listening to a dissenting preacher that has been holding forth here for some months past ; a sanctimonious person, whose sincerity, however, in his vocation, I am very much inclined to call in question."

"Indeed, this is a pity ! There is nothing more interesting to be witnessed in the middle and humbler classes, than a proper and due sense of religious duty ; but when infected with the poison of cant or fanaticism, or again, puritanic austerity. . ." . . "There it is ! there is the mischief in the instance of our worthy landlady ! Her pious propensities are unhappily much tinged with harshness, and warped by certain prejudices which betray the weakness of mind that has exposed her, I fear, to the arts of this preacher—let me see, what is the fellow's name ? Oh ! Quandish."

"I regret much to hear this ! But what makes you doubt this man's sincerity in his vocation ?"

"Why, because he has rendered his influence over the mother a stepping-stone, as I suspect, to paying his addresses to the daughter, and——"

But just here the presence of Mrs. Wetherby at the glass door opening on the lawn, was a summons to her guests to repair to the room where dinner was now being placed on table. Nor did they wait long when, the soup being dismissed, the fondly looked-for "cate" made its appear-

ance ! Each fish was served up in the Maintenon style, in an envelop of paper, in reference to which the facetious Doctor exclaimed—

“ A charming epistle this from Gertrude ! let us hasten to open it, and discuss its contents ! Was ever love-letter more amiable ! ” And certainly the zest with which our *gourmand* now busied himself in exploring the inviting contents of that envelop may be excused by even the chilliest votaries of epicurism !—of such savoury fragrance was the steam,—such luxurious richness was the flavour ! The sense of taste here fairly found its paradise, and culinary cunning might claim its apotheosis ; the voluptuous assault on the olfactory at once and gustatory sense took the soul by storm, and made bliss, as far as regards animal enjoyment, complete. No gold fish meandering in liquid circles of the purest lymph presented an object of greater beauty than the grace with which these finny fairies of the meer swam now in a soft amberflood of Lucca oil. They were the “ Naiades ” hailed by that gastronomic faun,—the “ wood-and-lake loving ” Esdaile ; or rather, we should say, the “ char-and-sauce ” loving Esdaile. Little time was lost by the Doctor in making his companion acquainted with the epicurean curiosity before them, a specimen of which he placed on his plate in triumphant confidence of its eliciting all the encomium it deserved.

“Did I not tell you that you would find it superlative?” he exclaimed, the moment he could spare breathing space for speaking, from the luxurious occupation of feasting. “On me, who am no novice as to its excellence, it improves more and more in stimulating my appetite every time I approach it. It is impossible to tire over so rare a ‘cate.’ What, then, must its spell be upon you, as a stranger, to whom it offers the additional zest of novelty!”

“It is indeed a great delicacy,” replied the Colonel, in a more chastened and polite style of encomium than his enthusiastic companion; “it certainly surpasses any ideas I had formed of it from what I had heard. It puts me in mind, in a certain degree, of the more delicate specimens of the *chevalier ombre* of Lake Lemman, and is pleasanter to the palate than the boasted *lotte* of that lake.”

“Mount Skiddaw to a molehill! *Chevalier ombre* and *la lotte* cannot stand in comparison with it. No, nor one of the whole seventy species of fish that Rousseau’s catalogue enumerates as tenants of Lake Lemman. Behold the hue of these melting pink flakes, alluring as the blush on Gertrude’s cheek who cooked them! A bumper to her health, Colonel.”

“By all means. We were senseless, indeed, to forget the *artiste* which Heaven has provided us on

the present occasion, no less than the viands prepared by her ; offering an agreeable contradiction to the rule of the proverb, that Heaven sends the last, but a less benign power the first."

"True! The adage has been indeed reversed, and the privilege of the power of evil for once suspended by the ministration of an angel—as you'll say when you see her. And now, Colonel, I think you will remember our lakes for something more inviting than the hackneyed topics (though well enough in their way) of 'mossy banks and precipitous cliffs,' &c. Give me such a specimen of their beauties as the dish before me!"

"Certainly they are beauties sufficiently attractive. But, talking of 'beauties,' I have a curiosity further to set my eyes upon the damsel, the presiding nymph of these haunts, whom they call—"

"The Beauty of Buttermere you would say! Oh! you shall see her all in good time," interposed the Doctor, helping Renmore and himself again to the luxurious "cate" before them. "Everything in good time! At present, nothing can be more beautiful, after a long and fatiguing ramble, than this char. This is our 'Buttermere-Beauty,' at present! A little of this sauce, Colonel; you'll find it an aid to the palate—the Chili vinegar is by you, and then," he continued after a short pause, which was occupied in doing honour

to the contents of his plate, "why then—and after our char-feast, you shall feast your eyes on 'the Beauty.'"

"Is she really so peerlessly beautiful as report bespeaks her?"

"Oh, yes! she seems to have turned the heads of all the swains, high, low, rich, and poor, that come within the dangerous presence of her charms. Every ringlet is a snare for the heart. In every dimple lurks an ambush for the heart-ache—bless me! how exquisite this last and smaller fish to which I helped you is—let me give you a little more! And—what was I saying? Oh! about the Beauty. Ay, her eyes—what do you think, talking of her eyes, happened once to a certain reverend prelate?"

"I can't at all tell," replied Renmore, laughing. "I suppose, as has been the case with other reverend persons before him, he was not proof against the all-subduing power of beauty."

"Why, he actually forgot himself, and was 'out' in repeating the benediction over her as she was being confirmed!* The long silken lashes of her eyes so bewildered the worthy prelate, that he was

* The anecdote in the text was current in the neighbourhood of Buttermere at the period to which our story refers, and was one of the many anecdotes related of the wondrous effects produced by the charms of this Venus of the lake country. Peter Pindar, by-the-bye, has some stanzas on a similar occurrence.

struck mute with admiration for a brief space, when she, wondering that he did not proceed, ventured to look up, and yet more, to obligingly prompt him in the words that hung suspended on his tongue. He was speedily recalled to himself, took the 'pious hint,' poured forth the suspended benison, and the Beauty of Buttermere was accordingly confirmed !”

“A compliment, indeed, to the miracle of her charms! And pray, out of so many admirers as she must possess, who, of all others, may be the happy swain whose addresses she smiles favourably on?”

“Why, really, I believe no one can hitherto account himself thus blessed! And yet she is no ‘scornful damsel,’ as the old ballads have it, nor difficult to please; but is, I fancy, somewhat above the common level of her rustic admirers; and what is more, values her freedom too well to be willing to forfeit it——”

“A very Dian of these wilds!” observed Renmore.

“And let me add,” continued the Doctor, assuming a look and tone of greater gravity, as he now, with becoming respect for the “main chance,” lowered his voice, “let me add, that she is right to be cautious how she disposes of herself and her freedom, for she will have a very pretty property

one of these days, when Dame Wetherby (you are aware the Beauty is no other than her daughter) adjourns from this little hostelrie to that universal ‘Traveller’s Rest,’ the grave! Nay, it will be worth any gentleman’s while even to seek the happiness of her hand.”

“Indeed!” replied Renmore, on whom this piece of information failed not, evidently, to make a certain impression; which, however, he turned aside as he remarked somewhat abruptly, “pooh! pooh! the man who may be fortunate enough to win the renowned Beauty will have a dower sufficiently rich in her charms! But, by-the-bye, you were saying something in our conversation before dinner about this preacher—this—what’s his name?”

“Quandish! ay! the fellow who has equal impudence and cunning to pay her his addresses, in which he is encouraged by her mother; who would consider her alliance with such a pattern of piety as a beatification of which St. Cecilia might herself be jealous!”

“And what does the Beauty say to her saintly admirer?”

“Why, she sees through the mask of his pretended saintship, which would be enough to make him despicable in her eyes, were he not an object of her dislike in himself, and independently of his mock vocation of sanctity!”



Robert Cruikshank fecit.

... he started, a ... self ...

“ And how does her mother receive this unmasking of her favourite preacher ? ”

“ There is the grievance ! and Gertrude is under a cloud somewhat, for the undisguised manner in which she at once expresses to her mother, not only her disgust of this Quandish, but her regret that her parent should be so much under the influence of his persuasion and saintly quackery ! ”

“ Ah, then, this accounts for the corners of the good dame’s mouth being drawn so demurely down when her daughter was mentioned ! I thought she received the compliments paid Gertrude with singular stiffness. But I long to set eyes on this marvel of the place—this ‘ beauty ’ *par excellence* ! though I question much if I did not, at the close of my rambles this day, witness a loveliness that would vie with ” . . . and here he started, as Gertrude herself entered the room, while he continued . . . “ and whom I recognise in the fair person I now see before me ! I do honour to the beauty which struck me at first sight,” he added, as he rose and bowed to the lovely girl with so much graceful gallantry, mingled with so much chastened respect and real pleasure at meeting her again, that it could scarcely fail to plead yet more in his favour with the fair object to whom it was addressed. At least we may suppose so, to judge from the glowing blush that overspread her cheeks,

and the smile that added sweetness to a countenance whose downcast graces shewed now "to perfection" (as the little Doctor afterwards declared) those long silken lashes that had produced so powerful an effect on the worthy prelate.

"I thought," continued Renmore, "that the lovely herd-mistress that stole my heart as she left me on yonder heights of Buttermere could be no other than its far-famed 'Beauty!'"

"Oh! what you have met before, eh, Gertrude?" asked the Doctor; to which inquiry Gertrude replied with a smile, as she proceeded to place the dessert on the table, to which stage the repast had now arrived.

"Yes!" proceeded Renmore, speaking both for her and himself, "we met for a moment, and what is more, I asked her to direct me to the best inn in the village, and also where I might be happy enough to catch a glimpse of 'the Beauty'—both which requests she fled me without granting."

"Ay, because she knew you could not be long before you discovered both! Eh, Gertrude?"

"I hope, Sir, you had no difficulty in finding your way?" she replied, with the same modest cheerfulness and native grace that had already worked such a spell on Renmore, and which enhanced so much the charm of her person and countenance. As she spoke, her eyes were raised for a

moment on Renmore's face, and then sank down again softly as the blush that came and went on her lovely cheek.

"Oh, no," said the young officer, (for such he appeared to be,) while the arch little Doctor fancied he perceived somewhat of a hesitation in his tone that was not unfrequently the case with those who were rash enough to engage in a dialogue with the Beauty. "No," he continued ; "but I fear I shall have a less easy task in finding my way out of this spot than into it, now I have discovered one who will render it so difficult for me to leave it."

"That were unfortunate indeed, Sir," rejoined Gertrude, with her usual becoming archness. "And yet, I have heard that gentlemen like yourself do not generally find it so difficult to take their leave, when inclination prompts them, whatever claims there might once have been to bid them stay." And as she spoke, the blush again involuntarily rose, giving a new charm to her words and countenance.

"Hey, Colonel ! What ? Gertrude !" exclaimed the facetious Doctor. "Why, I do believe you are smitten with each other already."

Gertrude, as she now withdrew, did but laugh at the Doctor's bantering ; for it was quite "in his style" to amuse himself with a pleasantry wherever

there was an excuse for one. She laughed with her wonted cheerful simplicity and modest gaiety, which laugh was the only token of dissent (if such it was) which she gave in return to his raillery. As for Renmore, like a true soldier, he spoke his mind bluntly enough, as we may believe, at least, when he said, "For my part, Doctor, I make no scruple in owning you have said no more than the truth. Smitten I am, and am not ashamed to avow it!"

"And strange would it be," rejoined the merry Doctor, as he poured out a glass of claret, "if you were not! To see Gertrude and be simultaneously smitten is a matter of course. The spell is universal; it puts me in mind of the Arabian Nights' story, where I don't know how many of the Sultan's liege subjects are, one and all, overtaken with the sway of the enchanter, and held tight in one position, or set a-singing, or mastered at any rate, in some way or other, by some one paramount law of magic!—So let us drink the Beauty's very good health," he added, pushing the claret to Renmore.

"With all my heart, Doctor," replied the Colonel, filling his glass; "but yourself! have not you too been sensible?"—

"Oh! *I*—a man of my tender susceptibility!—of course I have been amongst the foremost who have bowed beneath the spell of the enchantress.

Bless me, I should be quite hurt—quite offended—if I thought that you imagined me insensible enough to her charms as not to be smitten—according to the universal fashion !”

Though the Doctor might banter, and scarcely be able to feel serious on any subject, or perhaps give Renmore credit for being so on the present occasion, yet we can only say, that we are more willing to believe the sincerity of his avowal than the justice of the Doctor’s banter. Nay, we have a better opinion of him for the frankness of his confession ; and trust sincerely, if destiny, circumstance, misfortune, or darker causes, rendered disguise at times a necessary precaution, yet that, in the present instance, he spoke as he felt, and without dissimulation.

Well, indeed, might he be “ smitten,” to adopt again the homely phrase of the Doctor’s banter ; for if the lovely herd-mistress had appeared all beautiful on Renmore’s first rencontre with her, her charms, if possible, appeared to yet more advantage in the guise in which they were now arrayed at the close of the domestic duties of the day. After the “mighty matter” of preparing the char had been concluded, (since to no other *artiste* than herself would Esdaile trust an experiment, on the success of which his peace of mind so anxiously depended,) she had hastened to perform her evening’s simple

toilet. A beauty like hers well illustrated the picture of the poet, in being "adorned the most when unadorned." If she was lovely as any Dryad smiling through the golden security of Arcadian glades when she first beamed on Renmore's sight in the wilder floating gear of her rustic drapery—skimming, with light step, the sunset-slope—her form perhaps appeared with added grace in the symmetry and elegance which the closer dress she now wore was calculated to display. Her ivory neck, and the pure transparent complexion below it, were all given to the worship (we may justly say) of Renmore's eye, since, according to the fashion of the period, the dress was worn lower than a better taste has since adopted. But those virgin snows—that demeanour of modesty and native dignity combined—beamed on the heart of the gazer and on Renmore's, not to pamper the eye of sordid passion, but to banish every thought that could desecrate their purity, or attune itself to less generous, less exalted themes than admiration and devotion! You, over whose remembrance the artificial semblance of Lely's patrician canvas awakes, as we are depicting the peculiar mode of dress in which "the Beauty" was arrayed, banish such unworthy dreams from your minds, and regret that the artist had not drawn his figures from a chaster model. You would then have acknowledged

how much higher a grace, how much more bewitching a tone and feature, the finishing bloom of modesty, of native simplicity, and the guileless affections of the heart beaming through the brow, can impart to decorate beauty ! Ye would then have seen the triumph of true loveliness over the spurious lustre, the voluptuous languor of tinselled charms,—the painter's soul would have been purified, and his pencil dipped in the colours of poesy — the colours themselves (as Milton says) “ of heaven !” All was pure, in truth, as it was bewitching around her, as Renmore's heart could well testify, where she walked, as Byron sings, in “ the light of her beauty.”

against the window where the companions sat, as it winged past on its “droning flight.” The angler was about to recommend an “adjournment” to rest—a proposal to which Renmore, too happy to be left to himself, was most willing to assent, when his answer was arrested by a voice which sounded somewhat like an ill omen on his ear. The forlorn and lugubrious cry of the screech-owl, whose hootings occasionally resounded from some hollow tree, where it had emerged from its nest to complain to the moon, was music and “sweet numbers” compared to it! It was the voice of some one conversing with the landlady of the hostelry in the entrance passage; and Renmore thought it proceeded from a person he knew, or had known, in consequence of a certain hollow and monotonous tone that characterized it, and which he considered he could scarcely mistake. The recollections and sensations it awakened could not be associated with any very pleasurable circumstances, if it occasioned the colour transitorily to forsake his cheek, while his breath was drawn in for awhile as he listened to the purport of the conversation. Dr. Esdaile had turned away to look out at the window, and enjoy, in the beauty of the “moonlight sheen” of glade and lustrous air, the prospect of a “charming morrow for the char,” through the next day’s angling. Thus, then, did Renmore overhear the parley:

“ Ay, if we go with a hearty determination to find him, we shall not seek him in vain. At least I sincerely trust so.”

“ True, true, indeed !” replied dame Wetherby, in a style where the “ sing-song” sanctimonious tone eminently predominated. “ Would that all that had endeavoured to find him had gone about the good work with a zeal equal to your own !”

“ Why, whom are they talking of seeking ?” asked Renmore hastily of his companion. Meantime, the only difference perceptible in the voice he now heard and that of the person to whom he fancied it belonged was a certain nasal twang, more than a semitone of which had been caught by the worthy and pious landlady in her reply.

“ I don’t wonder,” replied the Doctor, in a subdued tone, and trying to look decorously grave, though the smile that lurked in the corner of his lip denoted something like a reprobation of “ cant”—“ I don’t wonder at your inquiring whom they are talking of seeking !”

“ Whom ? whom ?”

“ Why—what is assuredly a very proper duty when entered on with proper feelings—they are, in fact, talking of ‘ seeking the Lord,’ in the language of that vocabulary which puritanism, at one period of our history, and ‘ cant’ at all times almost, uses.”

“And the persons talking?”

“Are no other than the gentleman of pious and oratorical notoriety, Mr. Quandish, and our worthy landlady. The preacher has formed one of a tea-party, and these are the ‘parting words,’ as he is now taking leave of his hostess.”

“Oh, that is all!” replied Renmore, smiling, and turning away with an air of pretended indifference—“Only, they talked so loudly that I could not help overhearing them, and noticing the character of their remarks.”

“Yes,” replied Dr. Esdaile, jocularly, “there is no mistaking the deep voice and sonorous twang of the worthy ‘methodist-parson,’ as the vulgar more unceremoniously term it. A thief under sentence of death might as easily mistake the purport of the judgment being pronounced on him!”

“A-hem! a-hem! Yes, indeed,” said Renmore, “it is a peculiar voice!” And here, if he had been, at first, under any alarm, it was now all dispelled by the purport of the conversation, as it thus proceeded between the preacher and his worthy proselyte, dame Wetherby.

“You will make my respects,” continued Quandish, “to the fair damsel—to Miss Wetherby—beautiful (yea, and in verity) as a rose of Sharon! You will make my respects to the damsel; and am sorry she denied us the pleasure of her company

this evening. Our party without her was mournful as is the hearth of desolation in a ruined abode ! Yea, indeed was it !”

“ Ah, Mr. Quandish !” replied the hostess, whose aspect of demureness we may imagine was now heightened by a look of pious regret—“ Ah, I should be sorry to think that the girl was one of the ‘ stiff-necked generation,’ but——”

“ Nay, blame not the damsel ! she is as the musk-bed where the fawn playeth—all sweetness.”

“ You speak too kindly of the ‘ perverse one,’ for such she is, for always absenting herself (I grieve to say it) whenever you happen to favour my poor house with your company, worthy Mr. Quandish.”

(“ A good hint, I should think now, to the blockhead to keep out of the way !” said Esdaile, commenting on the remark thus overheard.

“ One should imagine so indeed !” replied Renmore, while the Doctor added, “ You mistake, dame ! Gertrude is not perverse, though a girl of spirit. On the contrary, she is of the best and tenderest disposition !”)

“ Ay, but,” continued the demure “ mamma,” “ we know that much importuning doth gain our prayer at last. The stone that is long impressed with the falling of the water-drop doth at length

wear the mark of the same on its breast, although it be hard ; and the——”

And here the flow of sanctimonious eloquence bid fair to out-prose even the oratory of the felicitous Quandish himself, but that it was cut “short *in medio*,” like Hudibras’ adventure of the bear and fiddle, by sundry voices addressing the pious man and dame Wetherby at the same time. These proceeded from some matronly village gossips who had adorned with their presence the tea-party, (or “tea-total” party, as it is called now-a-days,) of which the “Magnus Apollo” had been the Methodist preacher.

“Come along, Mr. Quandish,” said one.

“It is growing quite late, as sure as I live !” exclaimed another.

“Dear me ! if the lake does not shine like a new shilling under the moonlight, for all the world as bright as silver !” said a third gossip ; “so good night, Mrs. Wetherby.”

“Good night, Marm !”

“Good night, Maum !”

The last repetition of which valedictory burden having been now twanged forth in recitative by Quandish and his hostess, the matrons who had commenced it succeeded in bearing off in triumph to the village the favourite preacher, while dame Wetherby gave directions to a domestic to close

the doors of the hostelry as she now retired to rest.

“ And now I can make my escape,” said Doctor Esdaile, “ since my respected landlady has marched up stairs. For unfortunately being ‘ honoured’ with the good dame’s confidence, she generally fixes on me when she is more than ordinarily communicative, (which, no doubt, is the case this evening,) to inflict on me the penance of hearing all her qualms, worldly, domestic, and religious.”

“ Nay, it shews that you are regarded as a friend amongst your rural patients ; and they must have a deep sense of your condescension at once and kindness to them, thus to fly to you for the healing of their mental wounds and uneasiness no less than physical.”

“ I’m much obliged to them ! but with many of them I find that the good nature and tone of familiarity with which I would wish to treat them all is sometimes a little abused, and subjects me to inconvenience.”

“ The fact is, it is difficult often to shew kindness or familiarity towards people without finding it is either abused or presumed upon. I do not, indeed, speak universally, but from what my own experience has often taught me to be the case. But the ‘ confidence’ so eminent a dame——”

“And so eminently ‘prosaic,’ you may add, as our good hostess, is no less disagreeable an infliction than the abuse of one’s good nature !”

“Assuredly, nothing is more inconvenient than to be teased by the confidence (as it is called) of weak-minded or qualmish persons.”

“You are never seen but seized on as a crutch for them to lean upon, until the weight of their grievances fairly breaks you down—and you then make your excuse and escape together. But good night, Colonel ! for it is time we were ‘a-bed,’ if we wish to be ‘a-field’ early to-morrow. Good night !” So saying, the Doctor took up his hand-candlestick and retired.

“ . . . To be thus frightened by shadows from my propriety,” thought Renmore to himself, when left alone, “by a mere voice ! Alas ! it is thus with conscience, that hears a voice in every wind,—that sees me walk this turbid, dangerous track of life, as if I were stepping at every moment on spring-traps ! . . . how altered am I from what I was ! . . .” and then, after a pause, he continued, “yet I never heard a voice more like his. . . . But why vex myself? since it was a mistake, a ‘false alarm.’” With this feeling he dismissed his unpleasant apprehensions, (too justifiable indeed !) and with the spirit of confidence and venture that was natural to him, determined to snatch any op-

portunity offered him of ameliorating his fortunes, and taking advantage of any happier plan of action presented to him. It is needless to say that this happier change in the spirit of his dream was effected under the tranquillizing at once and inspiring thought of Gertrude ; and in the happiness found in that interest for her which his heart had worthily conceived, he sought a refuge from the intrusion of every more painful recollection. . . .

“ Beautiful—and with the prospect of a handsome competency !” he reflected, “ My heart and the condition of my circumstances both conspire to make me aim at winning her. Did I love her less than I feel I do, yet the state of my fortunes prompts me not to throw away the chance of placing myself out of the reach of thy malice, galling and bitter Circumstance ! I feel the attentions even I have already paid her—such attentions, at least, as could be conveyed by the insinuation of address—are not indifferent to her ; and strengthened by time, may they not secure her heart—make her mine ! She cannot be blind to the circumstance of the impression she has made on me ! What female heart—what female susceptibility is ever blind to such an effect ? And I think I may hope she is not on her part disinclined towards me. . . . The interest I shewed concerning her friend Mr. Fenton—the interest too

that I evinced, of a different character, as regarded herself, made a certain impression on her which I could not but detect. . . . Could I win her, wear her ! . . . interested in her singularly as I am, and my affection yet increased, (as it would be,) with the gratitude I should feel towards her, as rescuing me from my present anguish, uncertainty, and turmoil—should I not make her happy ? Should I not be happy myself ? Abroad we should find an asylum, and seek other and safer climes than this, where content might yet be met. The scoffs of the world in this country I could set at nought, and fling from me the remembrance of those calamities that urged me to crime, at the same time that the murmur of those scoffs would die away behind me like a far-fading echo ! Yes, it must be attempted ! . . . No one, it appears, stands in my way. This preacher, this Quandish, is an object of her disgust. . . Now is the time ! . . . What better plan offers ? what better hopes arise ? As soon as our growing acquaintance will permit, I will make her a proposal. . . With a wish to make the partner of my choice, of my affection, happy, and be happy myself,—what worthier determination can I settle on pursuing ? And then, is not her regard for Fenton, the good clergyman, a secret link between us ? Yes, as much so as it is a cause of her distaste for this dissenting saint.

What should I care for the world had I but Gertrude to bless me ? We would be a world to each other !—Enough, it shall be so ! Circumstance—the fears of the past—the hopes of the future—the wish to rescue her from the importunity of one she dislikes—the favourable opportunity this very circumstance offers of the better recommending myself to her—the defiance of fortune, and the malice of man—no less than the love I bear herself,—all, all prompt me to the dear endeavour.”

So saying to himself, as he paced up and down the room, he now took up the candle and proceeded to his chamber with a heart confirmed and strengthened by resolve, and a step lighter at once and more assured. He stopped for a moment on the landing-place at the top of the stairs, which commanded a view of the meer. The beauty of the scene — the boughs bending over the water, and tinted with the same chaste silvery lustre in which the moonlight heavens had arrayed the wave—held him for awhile gazing with admiration on it as though the effect of some magic charm :—such was the radiance at once and tranquillity of the spell diffused around ! It seemed as though the spirit of the night glided over the calm bosom of the lake in a car of silver, and as Renmore followed in his mind’s eye this pleasing fancy, these words escaped him :—“ And why should not

scenes lovely as this be found, where life might be happiness for her sake, for Gert—”

Scarcely had her name escaped his lips, and ere yet it was fully pronounced, as he was now turning away from the landing-place towards the gallery, he was surprised by the form of Gertrude herself. She had, in fact, passed him as he stood looking from the window, but so light was her step that he had not heard it. The light of the candle she held was not so dim but that he could discern the blush that glowed on her cheek at having detected him in the mention of her own name, while, scarcely less confused than herself, he wished her a good night as collectedly as he could.

“Good night, Gert. . . . Miss Wetherby !” he said—“I was thinking—of the beauty of the view that window commands. . . . I was thinking . . . of all that was lovely !” and so saying, he made her a bow marked with all that respectful deference which had not failed already to impress her as regarded his manner, and which doubtless imparts to it its chief effect upon the female heart, and proceeded hastily past her.

She acknowledged his “good night” with a curtsy, her eyes being bent at the same time on the ground, and turned down a passage in an opposite direction on her way to her own chamber.

As Renmore passed the room of Dr. Esdaile—who, according to the nomenclature of hostelrys, was the “Number 3,” while himself was the “Number 1” of the gallery—he was greeted by the nasal music that proclaimed the merry little man was fast locked in the arms of sleep. “Rosy dreams” and slumbers “sound,” if not “light,” according to the more elegant idea of the poet, were his. Rosy were they as the gills of the char, on angling for which he doubtless dreamed, led along through the mazes of his dream by the meanderings of some favourite brook, and smiling in his sleep at his own ingenuity in casting his fly in a “likely spot,” and just on the tip of the rippling flood, to be eagerly “risen for” by the hungry fish. We think we hear him cry out in his sleep, “I’ve hooked him ! and a beauty too !” while the expert angler now trundles forth his line from the reel, and after playing with the fish, draws him complacently up and lands him in his hand net. Such were Esdaile’s dreams. Mrs. Wetherby’s had no doubt led her down to that fane of “sanc-timonious” rather than “sacred” oratory, where she hung on the rhapsodies of the Buttermere Rowland Hill, Quandish ; while the nasal music which witnessed the soundness of her slumber resounded in chorus with the echoes of that sublime predication which so edified her dream.

Renmore had now courted his pillow in search of the “rest” which every “traveller” under that roof now enjoyed, carrying out to its fullest extent the recommendation of its sign, or name. His dreams, too, promised to be no less a world of delight to him than those of the Doctor and his respected landlady. “How lovely she looked as she blushed at the mention of her name she overheard escape me !” he exclaimed, as he entered his chamber. “She turned not away ! no frown marked displeasure at discovering that I thought of her !. Herself invites me to love her, and confirms me in the happy resolve I have taken to make her the object of my suit !” Such were his words, and such the happy thoughts which possessed him, and in whose delight and radiance all darker reflections were now merged and dissolved.

He felt a “strange delight” which he had never yet experienced. He felt transported at once to some clime of beatitude and brightness such as that which the Arabian bard pictures, where he tells of the golden boughs, the sparkling fountains, the singing bird, and the luxurious rose-garden of his fable ! Such were the thoughts whose hues coloured the dreams of Renmore ; and, to heighten all, he saw her form amid their radiance, from whose aspect all their bliss and light emanated—he dreamed of Gertrude.

Well might the ancients invest the passion of love with divine attributes, since humanity is never so near akin to the exalted harmony, the beatitude and purity of heaven, as when love lights its spark of feeling, and kindles it at once with generous aspiration no less than devotional glow ! It was a sublime and beautiful “cunning” in the genius of antiquity to array all the loftier duties, no less than the nobler passions, in the colours of heaven itself !—that is, under divine personifications ; for its sages knew that the chord of feeling was most truly touched when the soul was tuned to the harmony of worship. And in this sublime deception practised on the mind, Honour, the Social Graces or Charities, Virtue, Labour, Renown, martial and civic, were all deified, and solemnized by the spirit as sacred and divine.

If, like one of the genii in a tale of enchantment, we have taken wing and hovered over the pillows of those already mentioned as courting repose, and witnessed them smile through their sleep in happy dreams, shall we forget Gertrude ? Her purer spirit ought to smile yet more brightly, and through a sleep irradiated with yet lovelier dreams !

We left her pursuing her way to her chamber, lit by the light of her own blushes not less than that of the taper which she bore. A statuary, to have seen her pass airily by, would have thought of the

graces of his favourite Psyche. Scarcely had she entered the chamber than she gave utterance to the thoughts which possessed her heart. Smile on them, chaste Night, and approve them! "Then he thinks of me! I heard my name escape his lips! Never, except in the instance of Mr. Fenton, my childhood's friend and monitor, did I see any one in whom I felt I could so worthily place confidence. . . . And then his interest in the subject when I mentioned the name of that excellent friend and guide! . . . Can he be acquainted with him? . . . And would Mr. Fenton sanction my attachm—" . . . And here she checked herself as the blush rose at the avowal her tongue gave to the secret of her heart. . . . "It is in vain to disguise from myself," she continued, "that the manner in which this stranger has addressed me contrasts itself too favourably to the nauseating importunity and uncouth advances of that hypocritical minister (she meant Quandish) not to speak to my heart in his behalf. But what am I saying! these are foolish thoughts, and for suffering which to occupy my mind a moment I am to blame. How vain, how idle are our secret thoughts often, and 'what extravagant superstructures (as Mr. Fenton used to say) do we raise on what light and uncertain foundations!' Here am I, in this humble walk of life which I tread—here am I, just because I have

felt a little flattered by the trifling attention of one so much my superior in station, harbouring fancies at which my better sense can but smile. No, no ; a person of birth and superior station in society can mean little more than to flatter the vanity of a humble village girl, however decently brought up she may have been, when he offers her attention. . . . And yet," (spoke Nature, unwilling to forfeit so pleasing a contemplation,) "is sincerity inconsistent with the attentions I have been sensible of? Or am I mistaken in believing the character I speak of as being too generous and too honestly proud to tamper merely with the esteem he is so well able to awaken?"

She gave voice to these meditations as she stood looking out, at the casement, on the lawn and its parterres, the shrubs, the flowers, and all the favourite objects of her daily care. Her eye rested on them, indeed, but not now to heed them ; for the objects which her musings followed were seen by her mind's eye, and the images it rested on were from within ! Dim and vision-like those mazes of earth spread before her, "glistening" in the dewy vapour that robed them as with a veil, and gleamed, softly tinted, in the silvery starlight. More lovely from their very imperfectness, they "dreamed before her ;" nor less pleasing nor less imperfect were the objects that she dwelt on in the hopes and fears

that now strangely, and for the first time, met her as she looked into her heart. But these visions, however naturally entertained by a young, a susceptible mind, called forth, too, as they were, by the challenge that had been addressed to them, were speedily dismissed; and Gertrude turned away from them and the casement at which she had stood together, with a smile at what she had considered her own vanity; while she now addressed herself to repose.

She had turned away, indeed, from those thoughts, but they still recurred to her in the dream that illumined her pillow. They still recurred in all their loveliness, pure and bright (to use Dryden's well-known illustration) "as young diamonds in their 'infant dew.'" Fairer to the mental vision, we may well say, is that bosom's interior, the shrine of that pure spirit, than even her outward graces to the eye! Her soft cheek was slightly flushed, as she slept, with the joy of her vision, a smile playing on the lips; and she fancied that she saw herself again transported to the sunset-slope where Renmore first met her, invested, as has been described, in its golden light, and that of her own blushes, as he addressed her. The manly grace of his form, and the distinction of his bearing—its native pride softened by the gentleness of his address—all awoke before her vividly as it had first greeted her. But the charm of the present moment was greater than

that of the real period reflected in her dream. The distance of incipient acquaintance did not warp the pleasure of this ideal meeting with any "strangeness!" No; hand in hand with him, Gertrude, with a lighter foot than usual, seemed to skim the sunny slope; and onward they rambled through mazes of flowers and banks, sweet with thyme as Hymettus of old; there she fancied they sought their home, amid realms of so much charm and content, and yet more in that happier world of each other's confidence and love! Such were the harmonies of those thoughts their hearts respired; such were the thoughts, too, that mutually found a tongue! Onward they wandered. A venerable figure met them, and smiled as he breathed his benison on them and said, "It is well, my children!" In that smile of benevolence the countenance of Fenton was recognised, and as he turned from them, they continued to proceed through the bright labyrinth of content, and bloom, and security which they had sought, when, lo! the purple light of that dream became overcast, and as, engaged in each other's converse, where soul reflected soul, they were beguiling the summer hours securely under a canopy woven with roses, and myrtle, and *agnus castus* flower, they were suddenly startled from their rest. The fearful yell of a tempest it was that now raged around them; and as they both rose, pale and scared, and

attempted to fly, they found themselves held back by an arm that sternly grappled with them. On looking round to witness the antagonist that, with a strength like the twinings of some huge serpent—some Laocoon's "asp,"—held them back, they recognised a countenance dark with malice and fiendish purpose—it was that of Quandish. They endeavoured in their struggle to turn back again to the canopy of roses, but the forked lightnings only gleamed over it to shew things loathsome—toads and adders, and the foul decay of a charnel vault, strewn with skulls, that seemed to grin on them in mockery of their terror. They then strove to fly forward again, still wrestling with the "difficult" hand of their antagonist, whose grasp was no sooner fought away from than it seemed to clench itself again on them with increased firmness. . . . "Ha! ha!" he seemed to cry out, with fiendish glee, "I will mar the happy ramble I am forbidden to share!" And the earth now yawned beneath them, and the side of the precipice on which they combated stood naked towards the gulf that gaped, fathoms deep, below it. Oh the anguish of that struggle!—its powerlessness to wrest them away from the gripe of the enemy, and the terror lest another movement might hurl them, in its lost footing, down the steep. Yet if this was their doom, it was not quite unavenged, for in the agony now

of the "close," and in the last effort to snatch themselves away from the dreaded brink of the precipice, their footing failed, and headlong they were hurled down it, dragging along with them their keen antagonist. His demoniac laugh still sounded in their ears, clearly audible despite their own cries and the elemental roar of the tempest that still battled around them. "Ha ! ha !" it shouted, "I will yet mar the happy" . . . and then a wracking gust of wind drowned the strain, which instantly, however, burst forth again. . . . "Ha ! ha ! I will yet mar the happy ramble I am forbidden to" . . . and here the stunning crash of the rock that fell with them, and to which they had vainly attempted to cling, as they first felt themselves about to fall, awakened a thousand echoes through the gulf, and drowned that voice of fearful mockery and fiendish triumph !

It is needless to say that the smile that had played on Gertrude's lip during the harmony of the earlier part of her dream had fled, together with that "purple light of love" that had invested it ; and, with flushed cheek, a heart beating with turbid pulsations, and breath deep drawn, she awoke, when, lo ! she opened her eyes to witness the face bent over her, and read the frown, betokening reproof and displeasure, of her mother.

"Gertrude ! what ! not up yet ? How is this ?

Do you know the hour? What can have made you sleep so late? Your rest seems to have been a troubled one. Rise immediately, I desire of you."

The lovely herd-mistress wanted not any better clock than the sun; and as she obeyed her parent's summons to rise, and hurried hastily to the casement to look forth on the broad and cheerful light, she answered by an expression of surprise at finding it so late, while she regretted not having been already abroad.

The visions of the night she did not consider it worth while to interpret to one from whom they would have met but with reprobation. Nay, she chid them herself as soon as she was left alone to reflect on them. At present she satisfied her austere parent by a promise that she would soon be down stairs. "And hark!" she added, "poor Fanchette and Rose (her two favourites out of the herd) are calling to their mistress in their lowings, and tell me I ought long ago to have led them forth to the hill-pasture. . . . Dear mother, I will soon be with you. . . . Poor creatures, I will soon come to you." . . . And so saying, the fair herd-mistress proceeded with what dispatch she might with her simple toilette, all thoughts of the dream of the night being now banished in her anxiety no longer to delay the accustomed and welcome duties of the day.

CHAPTER VI.

“Painful to thee, and from thy anxious thought
Of dissonant mood.”

COLERIDGE.

RENMORE's first thought in the morning, after that which was devoted to Gertrude, was, how he should emancipate himself politely from the companionship of his “friend” the Doctor. For, though good-humoured, and good-hearted too, in the extreme, yet he was not without inquisitiveness; and his society, though, as far as regarded himself alone, it was perfectly innocuous, yet it might still be the innocent instrument of leading our hero “across others,” whose neighbourhood might be fraught with danger. Exercise what vigilance Renmore would as to his movements, yet it still appeared to be his destiny to be dragged (whether he would or no) into new adventures and amongst new companions, the result of which naturally kept alive in his breast a perpetual apprehension.

Of all the sojourners at the hospitium of the "Traveller's Rest" the little Doctor had been the most alert (or "*sprack*" as they call it in the North) to start up and hail the "new-born day." Hurrying on his dressing-gown, he had waddled to the casement, and throwing aside the neat white and pink lined curtains with which Gertrude's hand had decorated it, he gazed on the face of the "orient morn," as he exclaimed, "Charming! delightful! here is a glorious day for plying rod and line!" and his little round freckled faceshine with joy, not quite exalted enough in expression for us to say it reflected that day-beam's glory, but exhibiting, in the distended corners of the mouth, that honest grin of satisfaction and complacency which has been designated by various humorous authorities "the grin of a Cheshire cat."

With all alacrity, the little man's *toilette* being dispatched, down he came to breakfast.

"Where's Colonel Renmore?" he said to Mrs. Wetherby, who was herself assisting to place the breakfast things on the table. . . . "Fatigued, I suppose, with his yesterday's ramble, and rather late in consequence?"

"And you are early, Sir," she replied. "Oh, it is a pleasure, verily, to be up betimes on such a morning as this, and bless Heaven for the existence bestowed under it! Yea, for the life which is

capable of enjoying the happiness yonder bright skies and the cheerful sun kindle in us !”

“ Why, now, that is true, Mrs. Wetherby,” replied the Doctor, while he added to himself, “ Pity, however, it was spoiled by the sad infection of that canting air !” and then he continued aloud, “ Yes, yes, a bright sun, and the prospect of a fine day’s fishing never permit me to remain slumbering the precious hours away ! . . . Whose portmanteau is this ? How came it here ?”

“ That, Sir, is part of the Colonel’s baggage. Jock, the Buttermere carrier, brought it—a graceless clown, I fear much. It arrived in the course of yesterday evening, and ought to have been taken up, with the rest of his things, to his room,” continued the landlady, as she forthwith gave directions to a domestic to execute this duty ; “ though in truth,” she added, “ the Colonel wanted not his other baggage wherewithal to complete his apparelling.”

“ Stop ! stop ! stop !” cried the inquisitive Doctor, as the portmanteau was being lifted away, while himself was occupied in reading the address on a card attached to it. “ Heyday ! the *Honourable* Colonel Renmore, *M.P.* ! . . . So you have a Member of Parliament in your house ! Well, I shall not forget my friend, Colonel Renmore, “ *M.P.*,” when I am in distress for a

frank ! I took him for a distinguished person at first sight ; and his address, bearing, and remarks, all confirmed me in my opinion."

Just as these words were uttered, in came Renmore, and the hostess received her distinguished guest with a right reverent curtesy, observing, "that the portmanteau in question had been just sent up stairs to his room, with apologies for its not having been sent up sooner. So saying, she withdrew, leaving Renmore and Doctor Esdaile at breakfast, a component part of which was of course some broiled char, without which the genuine "laker," at the period now in contemplation, would feel as much under denial as a Highland dweller along the banks of Spye or Inverary water would without a "salmon steak." But to leave the char (to which due honour has been done to satisfy the keenest epicure in a preceding chapter) and continue the conversation—

"And the address on the portmanteau, which caught my eye," said Dr. Esdaile, "has instructed me that I may make bold, when in distress for a frank, to request one of Colonel Renmore—if it is not taking too great a liberty."

Renmore smiled as he replied, with a polite inclination of the head, that "a frank was always at the Doctor's service."

"You don't know," rejoined Esdaile, "how

much the 'good folks' in these remote regions (as indeed they do everywhere) think of the favour of a frank!"

"Yes, a Member of Parliament is chiefly looked on, as far as his correspondence-loving friends are concerned, as an instrument of franking utility!" observed Renmore, good-humouredly.

"A *frankable* animal!" exclaimed the Doctor, laughing. "Oh, you will be much in request with various friends in the neighbourhood to whom I shall have the honour of introducing you, should you permit me. Mr. Lawton, the 'Squire,' (as they call him,) of Blacktarn, and his fair daughter Laura, will feel highly flattered by the acquisition of so distinguished an acquaintance; and——"

The communicative little Doctor was running on, as much pleased himself at the prospect of introducing the "distinguished stranger" to the circle around as any of the circle itself could have been at the honour of the introduction, when Renmore, alarmed at the topic of society, which he was so anxious to avoid, was obliged to interpose an excuse.

"You are very good; and I should have been delighted to avail myself of the kind offer you make me of——"

"Charming girl, Laura Lawton—heiress to an estate of 3000*l.* a year!" . . .

"Indeed!" . . .

“And her father as excellent a person as you can find anywhere.”——

“No doubt ; no doubt.”

“Though he has his peculiarities—his oddities ! You will see them at church next Sunday, and——”

“You are very good, but——”

“Oh, not at all ! I shall be too happy to——”

. . . “Really my stay in the neighbourhood is likely to be so uncertain—so short—that I can hardly look forward to making any acquaintance here. I should hardly like to do so, merely to break it off again so speedily. I am a mere bird of passage, and no sojourner here beyond taking a ramble by the meer-sides and along the hills.”

“The very object, then, in which my poor services can be available,” replied the Doctor, determined not to let his distinguished friend escape him, as he now rose hastily, breakfast being at length terminated. “By all means, Colonel,” he continued, “lose no time in seeing as much of the country as you can. I will myself be your guide ; and a little angling excursion will be just the opportunity for you to see the most charming haunts it possesses. The weather is delightful ; let us lose no time.

So saying, the Doctor sallied forth in quest of his fishing implements, not waiting to hear the excuse Renmore begged to offer, as he said, “Really,

having so many letters to write to my constituents and others, I fear I must be a prisoner to-day, and must decline your kind——”

But Esdaile had hurried away, exhibiting a pertinacity as active as that with which he would secure a fish that, though shy at first, he had at length beguiled into taking the fly. It was too happy a treat for the lively Doctor, in the monotony of an existence in the Cumberland and Westmoreland wilds, to have a new-comer to “lionize” round the region of mountain and meer. His love of novelty would not permit him to throw away a boon so providentially offered, and so welcome to his bustling disposition. If he heard Renmore’s excuse, he would not listen to it; so our hero, tacitly commiserating himself for the penalty the Doctor’s officiousness imposed on him, took up his hat, and followed his “friend’s” steps reluctantly to the entrance door, determining to make his escape as soon as possible. Meantime he looked warily forth at the porch on all sides, and seeing no soul stirring to interrupt the beautiful solitude of the lake and the surrounding haunts, he quieted the apprehensions which any want of vigilance on his part must necessarily awaken.

“My rod, my fly rod, if you please!” exclaimed the angler, asking a domestic for his fishing implements, when they were placed in his hand by dame

Wetherby herself, who issued from a little room at the side of the passage, close by the entrance—a retreat which was the “*sanctum sanctorum*” of her meditations and parties—of piety and—tea.

“Ah, Doctor,” she whined forth, as she came into the porch where her guests were standing, “I never see you in this spot but it brings the tears into my eyes, to think of the time when you used to look in regularly here from your fishing to see my poor dear late husband !”—and here her utterance was impeded by the handkerchief, which doubtless she intended to appear as though it stopped the sorrow at her eyes.

“Ah ! indeed it was a period of painful uncertainty ; but it is vain to regret over a man when Death, that stern angler, has once hooked him. . . This ‘top’ bends nicely, does it not, Colonel,” he broke off, exhibiting his angle rod to Renmore. . . “Ah, Mrs. Wetherby, you lost a good husband when poor Mr. . . . A prime piece of hazel, Colonel,” he continued, again recurring to the rod, “and will ‘play’ well if a good-sized fish tugs at the line. . . . Yes, yes, Mrs. Wetherby, he was a worthy man your late husband—a worthy man ! But come, Colonel,” he added, in an under tone, “for now I fear our worthy landlady’s soratory will begin to flow—perhaps more copiously than her tears.”

Nor was the Doctor mistaken, for the spring of

Mrs. Wetherby's sensibilities having now been awakened, she would have inflicted a Jeremiad which would infallibly have spoiled a good day's fishing, had the angler been "remorseful" or "ruthful" enough to stay and listen to it.

"A worthy man he was, you may say, Doctor," continued the 'bereaved widow.' "Ah! I remember it was his pleasure to be wheeled into this porch, and sit in the sunshine, after he lost the use of his limbs, poor dear man; and Gertrude would sit by his side and wait on him. Oh dear! a poor lone woman has he left me! We did all we could to keep up his flagging strength—but who shall say nay to the judgments of Heaven? Man proposes——"

"But Heaven *disposes*!" interposed Esdaile, hastily, tired now of weeping for the dead with one eye and ogling at the brighter associations of life with the other. . . . "It is so, it is so, Mrs. Wetherby," he continued, shaking his head, and at the same time fidgeting out of the porch-way, accompanied by Bryan, who now made his appearance again, leaping upon his master. . . . "Good morning, my dear ma'am, good morning!"—when now, being fairly out of the porch, and some few steps advanced on his way, he relieved himself of the restraint he had been labouring under, and indulged in a little laughter.

"Why, what is the theme of your merriment?" inquired Renmore, smiling.

"To hear my worthy landlady pretend to lament and whine over the loss of a man that, when he was alive, she slighted and could not bear."

"What was her reason for this? though in this little piece of hypocrisy she exhibits what is witnessed in many besides herself!"

"No doubt, no doubt; but the fact is as I tell you. As to the reason of her dislike to her husband, I really cannot speak—that is, for certain, but——"

"But what?" asked Renmore, as his informant stopped short in his tale with a significant look.

"Why, there was a story whispered about that our Beauty of Buttermere owed her parentage, on the father's side, to a higher stock than the late 'good man' Wetherby!" . . .

"Indeed!" . . .

"I don't know the truth of it, but it is whispered, as I said before, that our worthy hostess was 'married up,' as it is termed, to her late 'dearly beloved and lamented' husband for convenience sake, and at the kind suggestion of a certain noble lord, also lately deceased."

"And so (be it for what reasons it may) Mrs. Wetherby's affections never entered into the marriage contract she was induced to make?"

“Exactly ; and this she testified, by exhibiting a perpetual slight towards the late Wetherby, who, having suffered from a stroke of palsy, was rendered a cripple, and not long after died.”

“Was Gertrude at all aware of these reasons, whether truly founded or not, of her mother’s dislike ?”

“Not a whit. She not only believed—(as perhaps, indeed, she was justified in doing, for all I have mentioned is but surmise)—she not only believed, I say, that Wetherby was her father, but ever attended him, in his decrepitude, with the most constant and unremitting affection.”

“Charming girl ! She is as excellent as she is lovely ! In fact, it is impossible to doubt it, if you only look at the suavity of her countenance ! To think that her mother, who bears witness, as we heard her, to her attention to her late father, should maunder about her being ‘perverse !’ I am sure she is amiability itself !”

“Ha, ha ! smitten again, young man, I must exclaim !” cried Esdaile, laughing. “But you say rightly. Only see how a puritanic ‘turn’ prejudices the mind. Dame Wetherby, be assured, was originally of a different complexion from that demure person she has of late years become ; and more especially since she has been imbibing the sanctimonious unction of this Quandish. . . . ‘Perverse,

indeed !” you may well exclaim with surprise, at our hostess so designating her daughter. No, she is not perverse ; but I can tell you, as I have remarked before, she is a girl of spirit, and, let me add, the person that shall win her choice as a husband will be no common person, depend on it.”

Renmore looked away at the lake and the beautiful scenery round it, not wishing to shew by his countenance that his companion’s words had any effect on him.

“ Ah ! a lovely scene indeed, and I don’t wonder at your being lost over it,” resumed Esdaile. “ And now suppose we try this side of the meer first, before we go to the brook that runs into it ? There, you can perceive it,” he added, pointing it out at the further end of the meer ; “ if we don’t find any char where we are, we are sure to be more successful in the brook.”

“ By all means,” replied Renmore, while he added to himself, “ I trust to be able to make my escape, however, before you have tried long your success where you are.” In fact, if he had been a lover of the angle, he could have derived but little enjoyment from its use, for his thoughts were occupied too much on more interesting matters, and less, indeed, concerning his own safety, than on Gertrude. Well, the Doctor tried his luck for some little time without success ; not a single “ rise” could he get

from the char, and Renmore began to get more and more fidgety.

“There is not ripple enough on the water here, Colonel ; so suppose, without more ado, we adjourn to the brook.”

“By all means do you repair thither ; but as to myself, I regret that I have no more time than I require, before the post goes out, for writing letters to my various correspondents.”

“Ay, a Member of Parliament must, no doubt, have full demands on his time for answering letters, amongst other items of his public duty ;” and then, seeing Renmore was about to turn away into another path, he added, “I am so sorry you will not permit me to introduce you to a very excellent person, a Mr. Howbiggen, a patient of mine, and whom I am going to visit in the course of the morning.”

“You’re very kind ; but I really am unable now to allow myself the pleasure.”

“Well, another day. I shall most certainly not forget to look in upon you.—Bless me,” he added, grinning in Renmore’s face, “you look very young for a Colonel.”

“I am older than I look, perhaps . . . But interest, a-hem—family interest,” replied Renmore, endeavouring to smile, though he could not help reddening with vexation at the pertinacity of his comrade, who replied,

“Ay, true; the scions of our noble and more influential houses can command the promotion which merit, unaided by the same powerful assistance, often fails to obtain. No ill compliment to you, Colonel.”

The Doctor's remark, indeed, was right, however troublesome it might be. Men younger than our hero, who was scarcely nine-and-twenty, and looked younger than he really was, held, at that “notorious time” the rank we find him assuming.

“Not at all, not at all,” replied Renmore, fidgeting off, and smiling good-humouredly.

“Well, as you are determined to deprive me of your company, I will not press you to come any further with me, but——”

[“Oh, good heavens!” ejaculated Renmore to himself, “what more hangs on that ‘but!’”]

“But I could have introduced you, had you been a little less a martyr to your public duties, and the pain of uncertainty as to your movements,—I could have introduced you not only to the Lawtons I mentioned at breakfast, and my worthy patient Mr. Howbiggen, and also his maiden sister——”

—[“Delightful!” thought Renmore.]

. . . “But——”

. . . [“Another but! Oh! good heavens!”]

“But to a galaxy of ‘geniuses,’ or ‘genii,’ if you please,—an intellectual and literary circle that I call the ‘Genii of the Lamp,’ from their studious

propensities, or the ‘Genii of the Lake,’ from the romantic region of their dwelling-place !”

“You are very—particularly—obliging, and at a more convenient opportunity I shall—”

“By all means! to be sure! I thought you could not like, while in the neighbourhood, to be left in solitude. The ‘Genii’ I speak of would delight you. I need not name Golefield, and Routhmore, and Woodslan, whose fame has spread far beyond the wilds which they decorate by their presence.”

“Indeed, I honour their august names, and trust sincerely” (and here he spoke truly) “that circumstances will not debar me the pleasure of making acquaintances which I contemplate with so much interest,—nor render it necessary for me to quit a neighbourhood I am so delighted with—especially—” he thought to himself, his heart taking up the pause where his words desisted—“since Gertrude’s presence so strongly heightens its charm.”

“Well, I am delighted to hear you hold out hopes that we shall yet have the honour of your addition to our circle.”

Renmore bowed and moved away.

“And I may be permitted to look in for a frank.”

Renmore bowed again in assent, and “edged” yet further off.

“I beg pardon, but Colonel Renmore’s family

is that of Lord Clanrenmore, is it not, whose estates are in Caithness?" . . .

But Renmore had, fortunately for himself, taken advantage of a turning in the path, which led him round the cliff under which their parley had taken place, and when Esdaile had looked round for a reply to his last interrogatory, his comrade had disappeared.

"A fine, handsome, gentlemanlike fellow!" said Esdaile to himself. "A splendid match (a *bon parti*, as the French have it) he would make for Laura Lawton, the heiress of Blacktarn. Come, come; though her family is not quite so lofty a one as that of Renmore of 'Clan-ren-more, county Caithness—Colonel—M.P.'" &c. &c., yet still she is an amiable damsel, and pretty too; and with that most delightful of 'female attractions' (as some consider it), 'money,' she may well command the hand of even a loftier suitor than my friend the Colonel. And now for the brook . . . and then to look in at my worthy patient's, Mr. Howbiggen's. His sister, that estimable lady, yet gossip-loving spinster too, will ask me to stay during luncheon with them; and by the time I have sufficiently tried my luck in the brook it will be the hour when I must feel my worthy friend Mr. Howbiggen's pulse. How delighted Miss Howbiggen will be with the news of this 'new arrival.' Let me see—

I shall administer news and food for gossiping to *her*, and physic to *him*. . . . He shall continue the powders—they do no harm, if they do no great good.” . . .

With these salutary reflections, and prospects of dispensing aliment both for mind and body, the piscatorial Doctor proceeded, followed by Bryan, to his favourite brook, from which Mr. Howbiggen's cottage was not far distant. It was situate on the borders of the meer, its white walls being discernible from the spot where Esdaile stood, as they peeped through the trees that surrounded them. So leaving him to that “medicine of the soul” which the reflections of his happy solitude afforded—leaving him to this, no less than to administer, in due time, those more material medicines which his patients might require at his hands, we will now turn away from him, and follow on the track of Renmore. Was his solitude equally happy? Were any happy reflections his,—to “medicine” the soul? and

“Cleanse the foul bosom of that perilous stuff
That weighs upon the heart”?

as Macbeth says. At any rate the thought of Gertrude was balm to his spirit. But let us “after him,” and see what befalls.

CHAPTER VII.

“ He was a wayward and a simple child,
Fond of each gentle and each dreadful scene.”

BEATTIE'S *Minstrel*.

“ I fear thee, Ancient Mariner,
I fear thee !”

COLERIDGE'S *Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner*.

THERE is a crag that overlooks the land far and wide, from the height of Skiddaw to the banks of Ullswater. There the spectator quaffs largely the delight that azure lake-floods, bosomed in mighty natural basins at the mountain's foot—that rills, sparkling in spiral silvery columns down the hill-side—that blossomed meads, and copses, and moss-chequered banks, some nearer, some further off and losing them in the distance, afford,—while all mingle in one vast and varied prospect, and stretch in giant panorama around, beauteous as magnificent ! . . . There is a crag where the riven earth, as though cloven by some mighty convulsion of

nature, lays bare the secrets of a past world,—there the searcher after sublime truth, the geologist* above others, delights to trace, in legible characters, in its gigantic page, the mystic intelligence of Eld it reveals to him.

Poring on that dread writing on Nature's wall, writ by the invisible hand of the Creator, stood one on the brow of the precipice, looking down its dizzy height. The crow that poised it, on slow-wheeling pinion, midway down the steep, was as a speck; and the sense reeled with gazing, till it seemed, to any one looking down it, as if a certain fatality impelled him to fling himself headlong over the crag—when, shuddering at so perilous a sensation, he has hastily drawn back, and placed himself beyond the reach of that verge's fearful fascination. It was with a sensation such as this that the person who had been standing over the chasm, scanning its riven sides and the geological characters they displayed, turned away, and suddenly came face to face with our hero, whose pathway from the meer bank had led him, by its devious windings, along the cliff side to the spot where he now stood.

There was an intelligence and contemplative cast in the countenance of the person that arrested Ren-

* Granite, sienite, porphyry, trap, are all geological features of this region. The slate formation consists of three groups of hills.

more's attention. His full dark eye was stretched with the gaze through which the mind's inquiry seemed poring; and yet there was mingled with the exalted character of genius a simplicity too, and good humour, evinced in the smile that played habitually on the lip. And this characteristic was betokened also in the full, ruddy, cheerful aspect of the cheek, that added a benevolence of appearance not always found coupled with the higher and generally sterner features of intellect. If the appearance of this person was such as to excite Renmore's interest, if not curiosity, the remarks that subsequently escaped him were calculated by their singularity, no less than reflection, to increase it; and if Renmore has been witnessed as entertaining any apprehensions, generally speaking, as to meeting people, they, in the present instance, gave way to sentiments of a very different and more elevated order.

"A noble point of view this!" he observed, breaking the silence maintained by both spectators as they looked from the height.

"Ay," said the other, answering the remark without interrupting the fit of musing in which he appeared to be absorbed—"I was following a somewhat strange train of reflection as I looked at the records of a past world, that the strata of that rock exhibit."

“Indeed, they open a vast field to reflection, both awful and curious,—but what, in particular, suggested itself to you?” inquired Renmore, turning to the geologist, (for such he took him to be,) whose eyes were still gazing on the vacancy of some dream, or image of the mind, that occupied and amused his intellectual vision, as he smiled through his dream at the illusions pictured in it.

“Why, I was thinking, as I looked back on the image of the past, portrayed in the sublime crayons of that mighty Dædalean hand that made all things,—I was thinking, I say, as I looked back on the past, and traced the new series and creations of existence it exhibits as concomitant with new revolutions of earth and its improved strata—that one day, when this present existing surface of the globe is, with its human progeny, swept away, a yet better and improved essence or birth—ay, a purer porcelain than human clay, might be the produce and accompaniment of an improved quality, too, of strata.”

“An interesting and original speculation, truly!” said Renmore, smiling; “but what makes you think that any new stratum would be an improvement? Would it not rather be a worse, according to the belief that this present formation of earth is to be destroyed by fire? The melancholy adust and black hulk it will exhibit would appear to my

notions rather like a giant mole of cinder, or scattered rock, or mass of molten and worked-out ore dross."

"A just remark," said the geologist, (for so we will call him,) smiling as he felt he had met with a man of imagination, and so far, to a certain extent, a congenial spirit.—"You exhibit to me no unpoetical or unjust idea—but the curiosity of my own speculation is not so much of a chimera as you might imagine. Its probability is, assuredly, corroborated by the evidences of the past."

"And how so?" asked Renmore, smiling with mingled curiosity and incredulity.

"Why, these strata all bear record of an improved successive character as regards their capability of sustaining life in the beings that dwelt on them. Of each the soil, or "matter," has successively been less reluctant. On each an improved birth, no less than a new essence of vitality, has been engendered,—why then, should not, through Time's dark mazes, be traced a day—a dim futurity—when this present surface of earth, on which we crawl, (and where we frame such extended and mighty dreams, and so disproportionate to our petty span,)—why, I say, should not an improved surface of earth, under a new revolution of the globe, take its succession in the mighty routine which those strata before us shew it has already

made? Yes! after earth has been swept away, I can trace, from the assurance of its past gradations and successive improvements—a purer surface and a more refined soil as the cradle of a purer progeny, too, and more refined essence of vitality.”

“It is, at any rate, a pleasing and fanciful idea,” he continued, in conciliation of the self-love of the person he addressed, “such as might delight the imagination of a certain eminent genius that, I understand, dwells in this neighbourhood—I mean a Golefield, or even a Milton.”

The geologist smiled as he said, “Milton’s dreams were less fanciful and ideal, less vaguely original, you will perhaps say, than this poor Golefield’s you speak of. Milton’s imagination looked for its visions more in decorations of the past, and in received ideas, than in speculations of futurity and future novel creations. This metaphysical characteristic of imagination belongs to a later day—to German intellectual innovations—from which, perhaps, Golefield may possibly have caught a certain contagion of this kind—a certain tone—though, indeed, no positive hypothesis or system of opinions. As to the subject,” he continued, “which has just now been amusing us, I have witnessed, by-the-bye, a little poem* by Golefield,

* This is subjoined in the appendix, that it may be referred to, as illustrating the dialogue that has just taken place.

of which, should we meet again, I doubt not that I shall be able to obtain you a sight." Thus conversing, they passed down the hill by the easy slope on which the height was approached on its opposite and southern side, Renmore feeling his curiosity more and more awakened as to who the person could be in whose company he was, and who was characterized by so singular and (which chiefly amused him) so sincere a train of thought or speculation, despite its being so fanciful. "This must doubtless be," he said to himself, "one of Dr. Esdaile's 'Genii of the Lake.' I should have imagined it had been Golefield, by the peculiar fanciful characteristics that mark him. But it cannot be so, for if it had been himself, he would surely have said so, on my mentioning the name. Whoever he is, he is no common character; and if he is a geologist, he is not by any means of the common every-day tribe of brickbat hammerers and mechanical gropers after 'floetz, quartz, and trap.' "

Whilst engaged in these reflections, the attention of our hero, and of the geologist as well, was engaged by the appearance of an old man dressed in a sailor's habit, slowly approaching them from the valley at the entrance of which they now found themselves, having arrived at the foot of the ascent.

“ Oh, here is old Mike ! poor old man ; if he is going our way I'll help him carry his bundle,” said the geologist, with characteristic simplicity and kind-heartedness, “ and beg a story of him in return.”

“ What ! is he, pray, one of the ‘ Genii of the Lake ? ’ ” inquired Renmore, smiling.

“ Oh yes, indeed, I may call him so ! He is certainly an additional object of interest, and no insignificant one either in the spot where he is a dweller. . . . And is not his appearance ‘ picturesque ? ’ Look at the venerable grey locks floating from under his low broad hat, with the wild flowers and albatross feather stuck in its ample, but tarnished riband ;—and see the greaves or leggings of seal-skin the old man wears, tied with tags of blue cloth, by way of variety to his sailor's dress.”

“ He appears a study, at any rate, for genius to depict, either that of poet or painter,” said Renmore.

“ Ay, and is a genius, a poet, and painter, too, himself ! . . . He will tell you marvellous tales of the voyage he took to ‘ the icy sea ’ once that will make your blood run as cold as if you were hemmed in amongst the icebergs themselves.”

“ Indeed ! I should like much to hear a specimen one of these days of his powers.”

“ Well, here he is—mark him well. There is a sorrow about his brow that you may imagine Dante’s wore, according to the portraits of him, which all exhibit his countenance as though woe-begone from the fearful scenes of which he had sung, and through which you might almost imagine he had passed. The poet looks scathed as it were with the flames he has depicted. . . . But here is our ‘ancient mariner!’—Good morrow, Mike! are you bound for Keswick, or ‘whither-away’ do you wend?” asked the geologist.

“ I was making for Keswick, as your honour supposes,” replied the old “weird” man; and then looking at Renmore, he paused for a moment with his eye intent on his countenance, while he started involuntarily as if he had known or recognised him, from having previously seen him. Renmore, on his part, shrunk back from his scrutiny.—He had seen Mike before, and did not like to remember when.

“ Have you any news, Mike?” asked the geologist; “ we want you to tell us one of your stories. Here is a gentleman, a stranger in the country here, whom I have been apprising of your renown for legendary lore, and the perils you have encountered.”

“ Mayhap he has encountered perils too himself!” said the old man, turning his keen grey eye

on our hero with a look of significance. "No," he continued, after a pause, "I know no news but a report that the famous forger and impostor Hatfield is lurking somewhere about the district."

"Indeed ! I should like just for once to see that individual," said the geologist ; "I am told he is a very clever fellow and a most gentleman-like and well-informed man. Have you not heard so ?" he added to Renmore.

"Yes indeed, I have !" replied the Colonel, "but I understood that he had been known to have escaped from this district at Ravenglass some time ago," he added, looking at Mike with an air of inquiry, either pretended or real.

"Yes, that he did !" answered Mike, "and I know it too ! for a certain gentleman I conveyed in my little sloop lying there I found out afterwards was the very man. Lord, what rewards they offered for taking him ! I should know him again amongst a thousand."

"Would you betray him," asked Renmore, "should you chance to fall in with him ?" in a somewhat lowered tone in the old man's ear.

"I betray him ? not I ! I'm not the man to profit by any such 'sneaking trick ;' I think him too clever a fellow, for my part, not to wish he may escape after all."

"Well said, Mike ! that is worthy your honest

heart, and worthy the heart of a British sailor," said the geologist.

"It is indeed a Christian-like feeling," observed Renmore, "but in this state of society, where man is so much a 'wolf to man,' it is not often cherished;" and as he spoke his lip transiently quivered under the emotion, of which, for some cause or other, he was sensible, and which he found it difficult altogether to subdue. In saying this, he looked again at old Mike with a look of half mistrust, which soon however vanished for one of cheerfulness and confidence as the keen hawk's eye of the "weird mariner" altered its regard of dangerous significance for one of more benevolent meaning; while the Colonel at this moment finding his path was in a different direction from that which his late companion, the geologist, was proceeding upon towards Keswick, he took this opportunity of bidding him good morning as he left him and Mike to pursue their way together.

The singularity of character, in different ways, of both these persons, however, had made sufficient impression on Renmore's mind to induce him to cast one backward glance at them, after he had proceeded a short distance on his way. The favourable impression he had received of the benevolence of the geologist's character was now augmented by his witnessing him performing an almost filial act .

of kindness to the old mariner, by supporting him with his arm, besides carrying his bundle for him. At the same time, his attention appeared absorbed in some "tale of wonder" which he had solicited of Mike. He continued gazing at the "group," as a painter would say, when, with the natural suggestion whispered by individual apprehension, and that consciousness, it may be, of crime, by which we have already witnessed him haunted, he exclaimed to himself, "What can be the topic on which the old man seems to expatiate so earnestly, to judge by the gestures he uses? I wonder whether he can be speaking of me? . . . Yet, no; I do not think he would say anything—but I am encompassed with danger, and haunted by that worst of alarm, Uncertainty, and may reasonably dread every one I encounter!" . . . Well, indeed, might he say so, undaunted and enterprising naturally as he notwithstanding was. He had proceeded on his way a little further, when, on again looking back, he now witnessed the geologist pursuing his path alone, while Mike had taken another direction. He had not, however, gone very much further before his surprise was awakened by seeing the "ancient mariner" in his path, into which, it should seem, the old man had turned, from an avenue formed by a cleft in the hill, which had hitherto escaped his attention.

“ I have returned to tell you, Sir,” said Mike, “ (and don’t wish to ask you how far you may be interested or not in the matter,)—that there is a ‘reward’ offered for the apprehension of that same ‘Hatfield’ in this very district, as near, indeed, as at Keswick. So,” he added, in a lowered and more wary tone, “if he should be in the way, it were well he were on his guard !”

“ And no doubt,” answered Renmore, “ he would thank you sincerely, were he present, for your amity and well-meant caution. So the blood-hounds, it appears, are fast in their pursuit after him ! And who is the leader of the pack that is on the scent for him in this district, after all the doublings of the chase ?”

“ As usual, where the cover is deepest, the game is suspected to lie ; and in these lonely wilds is the quarry searched for. As for the pursuer—a public spy and blood-thirster can borrow no better guise than that of Religion to mask his real purpose—to veil the character at once and object of his presence.”

“ Under the guise of religion ! I know no such . . . that is . . .” said Renmore, hesitatingly, “ I wonder . . . I mean to observe, that justice is much obliged to such an adroit and cunning myrmidon ? But,” he continued, trying to assume a carelessness, or even jocularly of tone, “do you think the ‘quarry’

will escape after all? You have, I hear," he added, smiling, "the reputation of being somewhat of a soothsayer."

The old man shook his head as the grey locks waved solemnly over his brow, and looked at Renmore with a countenance that little reciprocated the forced jocularly he detected. On the contrary, his look bespoke sorrow, deeply mingled with the scrutiny of that regard which he bent on his companion. Even the constitutional, no less than habitual, firmness of the latter was shaken by that look of fearful significance and sorrowful feeling as he observed—

"You turn your eye very fixedly on me. Do you see anything in my countenance that augurs misfortune?" and he again attempted to smile as he spoke.

"Did I ever see a smile on the lip, with which the upper part of the face agrees not in expression, that I did not know it to be feigned* and forced?—to be the disguise of a mind ill at ease, and of a sick spirit?" replied Mike, with the same solemn significance, and which, indeed, generally characterized his tone. "The mind," he continued, "looks through the eyes; and the brow should smile in unison with the lip to shew the joy sincere."

* This was uniformly remarked of Napoleon's smile.

“You are quite a physiognomist, my good old man !”

“I would I were not !” replied the weird-mariner, still fixing his regard with the same expression as before on his companion, who now contemplated him with the tacit dread a man might be supposed to feel in communing with an evil spirit, however much he might endeavour to rouse up fortitude for the interview.

“Why,” asked Renmore again, “do you look so intently, and sorrowfully too, on me ?”

“Do not ask me why,” said the old man ; “the day will come which must prove me right,” and he made a movement as if to leave his companion and strike into another path which here presented itself, muttering at the same time words, the import of which did not reach Renmore’s ear.

“Nay, nay ; don’t leave me so abruptly,” cried the latter ; “I must know what it is that so arrests your attention,—that passes in your mind, as you bend your eyes so significantly on me.”

“Do not, do not stay me,” said the old man, with an expression of mingled dread and anxiety, while he shrunk from Renmore, who yet endeavoured to retain him with his hand ; “why will you hold me back ?”

“I must—I will hear ! . . . I beg of you,” said Renmore, anxiously.

“Why force me to make you miserable? I will not utter it aloud. . . . If you will hear it, then, advance your ear here.” He bent his aged head towards Renmore, and whispered words that shot like an ice-bolt to his heart. In vain did he endeavour to rally at the moment; he was for some little time bewildered in surprise no less than dismay, and when he came to himself again, and looked round for the old wizard (for so Mike was not unreasonably deemed) he was gone.

CHAPTER VIII.

“When I reach the door,
If heavy looks should meet me?”

COLERIDGE.

AGITATED, confounded, and with increased feelings of doubt and anxiety, Renmore pursued his way back to his “hiding-place,” it may be called, rather than abode. Happy would he have been if he could have felt that the spot of his present sojourn might indeed prove a hiding-place for him; but Mike’s communication forbade him to be thus confident. The thought of the “blood-hounds” being on his track haunted him at every turn; and with hesitating footsteps he retraced his way homeward, through rugged and devious paths, now overhanging the borders of the meer, now winding in covert mazes along the slope of the crag, sheltered by the impending rock-brow on one side, and on the other by the thick tangled briar and heath. As he stole along by this rugged path, he was

suddenly startled by a noise, which, however, turned out to be but the hurried rustling of the stray sheep that grazed on the mountain turf-slope, and whose repose under the bushes, whither they had strayed for shelter from the heat, was disturbed by his approach ; meantime the shepherd loiterer that he now saw, as the sheep-walk widened and the hill presented a more open scope for grazing, was even eyed by him, at first, with suspicion.

The little inn at length appeared in sight. Its neat though homely aspect looked all content, and peace, and retirement—joy to the wayfarer, and promise of rest and recruital . . . but not so to him. “Rest and repose,” he thought, “are not permitted me through the wide world ; for where dare I hope or look for security ? The glimpse of happiness I caught in Gertrude’s presence, how vainly was it cherished ! Who can it be that is thus haunting my path ? And can he, then, be so near the spot of my retreat ? Perhaps even now the ambush is laid for me !” . . . With these thoughts, naturally suggested as they were by his peculiarly hazardous situation, without any disparagement to that spirit of boldness and enterprise that we shall hereafter witness as characterizing him, Renmore arrived at the Traveller’s Rest.

He gained access to the house by a back entrance, that led into the garden across a little rustic bridge thrown over the brook ; and if he

had escaped the notice of any one in his passage hither, his alarm was justly destined to be aroused again by witnessing what was an unusual and at once unaccountable circumstance, namely, the presence of both Gertrude and Mrs. Wetherby advancing to meet him, as if apparently they had been looking out for his return home ! As Gertrude approached him, he thought to himself—“ Perhaps there is danger near, and she is coming to warn me, in her benevolence, from the spot . . . but no ; there is her mother also with her, whom I can scarcely consider of a disposition so charitable, despite her religious propensities. No ; they are possibly coming to tell me that I am a prisoner—that I am discovered—that I am known—that the myrmidons of justice are within these walls, and that my way is beset—my path surrounded—that escape is vain !—Or, yet more, Gertrude, taught now to mistrust my character, and loathing my presence, is come to betray, to decoy me, into their hands ! Well, death will be sweet if I am led to it by the hand of such and so dear an executioner.” . . . And having now come close up to the Beauty, he inquired, with as much composure as he was able to assume under his present causes of inquietude, “ How it happened that herself and his hostess had done him the honour of coming out to meet him ? Had they been waiting for him ?—looking out for

him ? . . . Yes," he thought to himself, "they must have been ; or how should it occur to them to look for my return to the house in this direction, rather than by the regular entrance. If, then, they have been looking out for me, on what account can it be?"

Such were his tacit communings as he awaited their reply. Mrs. Wetherby, being a person of much less observation than her more lively and intelligent daughter, did not take any notice of the transient change of Renmore's countenance, that involuntarily exhibited itself. Notwithstanding his talent at disguising his thoughts and subduing his feelings, the forced constraint of his manner, at the present anxious moment, as he endeavoured to veil his real apprehensions, did not altogether escape Gertrude. Far, however, was she from imagining its true cause, and the transient paleness on his brow she imputed merely to fatigue ; nay, so speedily did he regain his wonted composure, that any eye that had regarded him less heedfully than her own, (because, let it be confessed, with less interest,) would not have perceived any inquietude. Meantime, Mrs. Wetherby explained as follows the cause of herself and her daughter thus "coming forth" to meet their distinguished guest on his earliest return :—

"Oh, Sir ! there have been such a number of folks after you," she exclaimed, in a "sing-song" key, "during your absence."

“What for? what for?” interrupted Renmore, involuntarily, “and what folks, pray?”

“Oh! only ‘gentlefolks’ to call on you, Sir, as you will see by the cards they have left; and I was directed to say, with compliments, that should you think proper to dine at Mr. Lawton’s, at Blacktarn, or at Mr. Howbiggen’s, on the meer-side, close by, those gentlemen would be much honoured by your company. I thought, Sir,” she continued, curtseying, “I would lose no time in letting you know what they said, in case you might like to dine out; and so myself and Gertrude have therefore watched your return home, to know your pleasure, Sir.”

If the stone which Sisyphus was condemned to roll up the steep had been suddenly taken from his hands, he could not have felt more relieved than Renmore now felt, in being eased of the burden that had weighed on his heart. He was instantly “himself again;” and the colour that had transiently wavered in his cheek now returned to it, and every symptom of the uneasiness he had tacitly struggled to subdue was banished in the smile that now accompanied his words as he spoke. Gertrude forgot at once that anything in his manner had challenged, however momentarily, her notice.

“I am much flattered by the attention of the people in the neighbourhood, indeed, Mrs. We-

therby," he replied, "and shall certainly not permit their courtesy to remain long unacknowledged; but I am to-day a little too fatigued to avail myself of their kindness, however much pleasure it might afford me."

"Then you'll please to dine at home to-day, Sir?" interrupted the careful landlady; this being a point, it is needless to say, which it is of paramount importance to all worthies, male or female, of her calling to settle.

Her guest replied by an inclination of the head, little heeding the subject of her peculiar interest, as he proceeded, after a pause and with some abruptness—"And pray is Mr. Fenton (I mean the clergyman of Lorton,—a few miles off) much a guest in the neighbourhood here? I should perhaps have met him had I gone out to dine to-day."

"I really am unable to say whether that is likely or not," replied dame Wetherby, with more than her usual stiffness. "He is a very retired gentleman," she added, "and does not, I believe, enter much into society."

"But he is not the less beloved, Sir, on account of his habits of retirement," interposed Gertrude, taking up her mother's words; "and you will no doubt meet him, should you dine out on Sunday. . . . No; next Sunday week it is, that he comes

over to preach here in behalf of the Charity School." . . .

But the Beauty's words were here checked by the cloudy look of dissent which met her in her mother's countenance, while Renmore, perceiving it, turned the subject of his remarks in a different direction. It readily occurred to him that the proselyte of the dissenting "holder forth," Quandish, did not hear too complacently her daughter's good word in vindication of the Curate of Lorton.

"Ah, then, I shall see him, I dare say, next Sunday," said Renmore, hastily. "Thank you! thank you! . . . And so," he continued, with a smile of good-humoured irony, "I am indebted, I suppose, to the kind attention of Dr. Esdaile for the courtesies heaped on me during my absence on my rambles this day!"

"I dare say such is the case, Sir," replied the "widow Wetherby," her countenance somewhat cheered by the mention of a person more in her good graces than any other in the neighbourhood, always excepting the preacher Quandish. "A nice good-humoured gentleman is Dr. Esdaile. . . . But what time did you say you would be pleased to dine, Sir?"

"Oh, any time—an hour hence;" and here, as dame Wetherby withdrew, with a curtesy and a "Very well, Sir," Renmore continued his remarks,

with his accustomed easy cheerfulness, to her more engaging daughter, as he walked towards the house across the garden by the Beauty's side. "So you see, my fair Gertrude, the good people of the neighbourhood seem determined on not permitting me to lead the hermit's life of seclusion which I had proposed to myself on coming to these wilds!" (while he added to himself, "thanks to the officiousness of that troublesome little char-fishing Doctor.")

"Nay, Sir," replied the Beauty, with her usual becoming archness, "it is in them a compliment paid to you, that they should seek you"—

[“Oh, no doubt! no doubt!” he interposed, smiling.]

“For surely, Sir, if they did not, it should seem as though they considered you one of those listless and shy members of society that should be worthily left to themselves, and that”——

“Were no very great compliment, you would say. Well, but how do you know, that after all, they may not be mistaken in me? I declare (and here he spoke truly enough) there is no being in the world, however shy or listless, as you say, Gertrude, that would be more enamoured of solitude than myself just at present! . . . And why should I wish,” he added, while she looked up in his face with an air of inquiry, “for the companionship of others,

when I am sufficiently happy in that which I hope, now and then, to snatch in your own presence?"

The blush played on Gertrude's cheek in recognition of the not ungraceful turn Renmore's excuse had adopted; and she was about to reply, when the presence of dame Wetherby, summoning her assistance in the preparatory arrangements for their guest's repast, checked her words; and as she now withdrew, Renmore found himself once more alone.

He entered the same little room in which he had passed the preceding evening with Esdaile, and having closed the door hastily, "Thank heaven! thank heaven!" he exclaimed, "they have, at any rate, not yet hunted me out of my hiding-place. Oh! miserable situation, that I should have actually dreaded, on my return to this my skulking-haunt, meeting the being I really love, this bewitching girl here, for fear lest she too, with the rest of the world, should be seeking to betray me! Thrice-miserable, degrading, and fearful lot!—wretched, guilt-haunted man! . . . And is there no escape? . . . Is it only for a brief illusory interval I am at large, and stretch these limbs, unshackled and at liberty? Distressful, degrading thought! . . . And yet I must deem such to be my lot, if I am to give credence to the whisper of that fearful old man, or wizard let me call him. . . . My tale is, however,

safe with him ; nay, he knows more of me than I know myself, it should seem. And if what he warns me against must, as in all probability it will, be my destiny, why, whether I stay here or attempt to fly is one and the same thing. Sooner or later, it appears, the evil doom must be met and fulfilled. . . . What then ? Am I lost ? . . . I, who have braved such dangers and difficulties, and have escaped thus far—am I to be nerveless, tame, helpless, under a superstitious fear ? Pshaw ! . . . And yet,” he continued, after a pause, “though I am ready to spurn all such weakness, yet I know not why—there is a bitter presentiment in my mind that what the old man told me will prove itself too true. . . . Besides, the course of all probabilities is in favour of its verification. The wild story of my infant day . . . the strange destinies that marked it. . . . Yet why,” he continued, hurriedly, “must I believe they are to end in the fatal issue of which he warns me ? . . . There may yet be escape ! Courage, resolution, defiance of fate, may yet bear me through, as they hitherto have done !”

But just here dame Wetherby broke in upon her guest's private communings ; and herself and Gertrude assisted in placing dinner on table. The subject of his reflections, if it regarded any apprehensions as to future perils, of which the ancient mariner had warned him, seemed no less also to be

occupied on some singular disclosure concerning his earlier and infant history. The circumstances of such disclosure, whatever they might be, baffled the reach of his own remembrance, and for the character of which we must one day look to Mike himself for explanation.

Thus, then, swayed between apprehensions and hopes for the future, and anxious considerations as to the far past—in which the thought of “the good Fenton” mingled, nor all unrecognised by the tear that would furtively steal forth,—thus swayed by tenderer feelings at one moment, and at another, roused by the sterner thoughts that bade defiance to fate, and summoned up his natural resolution to his aid—Renmore’s turbid day waned.

CHAPTER IX.

“ Un medecin politique et flatteur.”

MOLIERE.

AND now to retrace our steps to the banks of the meer, or those of the char-stream that runs sparkling from the steeps of Melbreak, in order to join once again our friend Dr. Esdaile. We had left him with his dog Bryan proceeding on his favourite pursuit, until the hour should warn him that it was time to visit his patient Mr. Howbiggen, whose residence, we have already heard him inform our hero, was situate on the borders of the meer. It was at the distance of a quarter of an hour's walk from the village of Buttermere, and had been taken for a short period, by its present occupants for purposes of health. The Doctor, then, having at length stored his landing-net with a sufficient tribute of the “precious prey,” as a present for his patient's

sister, that estimable spinster, Miss Howbiggen, had found his way to their residence, and by this time had made the sounds of his merry chattering audible within its walls. We may say of the good-humoured, though somewhat bustling, Doctor, that he was a favourite with all who knew him ; and, indeed, if any proof were wanting of this circumstance, we are afforded it in the fact of his having been witnessed as in the good graces of even the demure widow Wetherby herself ! If he was popular for the good-humour that characterized his social qualities, he was certainly not less so for his attributes as a professor of the healing art ; and we doubt whether any disciple of Esculapius, Galen, Hippocrates, Avicenna, and “ Co.,” ever won more golden opinions, and we trust we may add, golden remunerations ! It will be subject of little surprise that such should be the case when we state, in addition to the testimony recorded of “ the golden opinions and golden remunerations,” which were the Doctor’s guerdon, the “ golden rules” also by which he sought health for his patients ; and if at times he failed in this paramount object, he at least seldom failed in securing the not unimportant one of popularity by his principle of treatment.

In a word, our obliging and epicurean M.D. always took care, as far as the case would admit,

to indulge the tastes of his patients, by which he proved himself no less a politician and philosopher in his art, than a physician. To flatter self-love and accommodate himself (as far as it was expedient for him to do so) to the inclinations, appetites, and whims even, of his valetudinarian catalogue, was always the principle of Dr. Esdaile in "dieting" his patients, and prescribing a "regimen" for them. Accordingly, the first "great rule" in his "Code de Santé," or "golden list," was—

1st. Always eat or drink what you find you like; for the circumstance of your liking a thing is itself a proof it agrees with you! Such is the law of Nature, that directs all animals to find nourishment in that which they chiefly like.

Not the least amusing feature of our sage's logic is the grave deduction made in it from "premises" so questionable. Now, though many exceptions may be taken to the above proposition as a general one, we may at least say it is a more palatable one, at any rate, than the water-drinking doctrine of Sangrado; and this gentleman's renown (it cannot be questioned) was as great as that of any professor of the healing art that ever "cured or—killed" mortal man. Leaving it therefore to schoolboys amongst others, whose propensity for plumcake at Christmas has made them suffer, to say how far our philosophic Doctor was right

in this his first proposition, we will, with similar brevity, record his second, which is accordingly as follows:—

2nd. Always breakfast as if you did not intend to have any “mid-day refection;” recruit yourself at mid-day as if you had never breakfasted, nor intended to dine; and dine, as if you were unconscious of having perpetrated the trivial interlude of the said “mid-day refection.” “Because,” adds our profound physician, “the circumstance of the appetite being hearty is a sure sign and proof of the health being good.”

There is again no gainsaying this “conclusion” at least, whatever we may say to the “premises;” so we shall at once proceed to the third, which deals at once in “philosophy profound,” and declares, with an almost oracular solemnity—

3rd. That there can be no health of mind without health of body; therefore, parents, look to your progeny’s health and strength well before you ply their minds with too much instruction. Lay a foundation of health first, if you are ambitious of hereafter witnessing strong mental powers. And ye, the vapour-be-fogged, nervously-worried, dyspeptic, phantom-haunted, moping, night-mare-ridden, and sleep-forbidden amongst my patients, let me “administer to your minds diseased” through the channel and medium of your bodily

frames first of all, ere health, with its joy, its elasticity, and light, can visit you.

In these "golden rules," as it pleased their proponent himself to term them, rested the secret of all the Doctor's art as a healer of mortal maladies, and, we may add, of all his popularity too; and having thus necessarily confided to the reader the principles of this great man's treatment, (*Nota Bene*—we will not call him "quack,") we are at liberty now safely to conduct him into the presence of the Doctor's patient, Mr. Howbiggen. The pulse-feeling ceremonial was now being gone through between the Doctor and the valetudinarian. The latter, we should premise, was a difficult subject to treat, however "cunning" might be the "leech" that administered to him; for, despite the Doctor's popularity, Mr. Howbiggen was one of those morose gentlemen that seem systematically to determine on being pleased with nobody and nothing,—who, in consequence of some early check in views of ambition or gain, (or be it what it may,) are self-abandoned to gloom and discontent, and universal captiousness!

Such was the case with Mr. Howbiggen, as we shall more fully glean by-and-by from himself, whose fretfulness of spirit had at last preyed so much on his frame that it had induced a corporeal malady congenial with that of his mind.

In order to recruit his strength he had repaired from the metropolis, where he generally resided, to the spot where we find him, at the instigation of his maiden sister, who condescendingly managed for him his domestic economy. This lady, who, though she doubtless had (as we all have) her "amiable failings," yet exercised much forbearance and kindness in putting up with the systematic grumbling and asceticism of her cynical brother, to whose dissociability she contrasted qualities perhaps even in the opposite extreme, her taste being very much that of living in a whirl of society, and "going out" as much as possible. With this she combined, however, much kindness of disposition and hospitality. Dr. Esdaile, in his somewhat blunt way, and being always partial to calling things "by their right names," would designate those little importunities she sometimes exhibited by the plain terms of even "gadding and gossiping." Such terms, if they certainly were not altogether inappropriate to the homely style in which the "rude folk" of the village would sometimes comment on Miss Hester Howbiggen, yet no doubt were a nomenclature that would be little pleasing to so august a lady as herself, could it have reached her polite ears. Looking forward, then, shortly to the felicity of introducing ourselves to this amiable person, our attention is at present directed towards witnessing with what philosophic

amiability the good-humoured Doctor parried the contradictory and ascetic style it was the "sour satisfaction" of his patient to exhibit. This worthy was found by his medical adviser seated in a huge arm-chair by the fire-side, even at that fine season of the year, for it was June. His head was covered with a snuff-coloured wig; a double-breasted buff waistcoat protected his chest, surmounted by a neckcloth of copious folds, twisted tightly round the neck, according to the ungainly fashion of the day. His knees were drawn up, and his feet rested on the fender. A newspaper divided his attention with a tumbler of spiced wine with a toast in it.

"And how are we to-day?" exclaimed Dr. Esdaile, as he duly proceeded to feel the pulse of his patient.

"How should we be?" answered Mr. Howbiggen, in a growling tone, not exhibiting by his manner or aspect that he at all entered into the good-humoured vein of the lively physician; "how should we be, when there is no reason on earth for being any better?"

"Reason!" replied Esdaile, nothing repulsed; "why now, I think there is reason. The pulse is far more regular; . . . the regimen has had the most desirable effects. How should it not, when it consisted of just precisely what was most agreeable to you? You will not quarrel, I hope, with a dish of char to-day, by way of variety? and (let me

see) a leveret and a little asparagus will not be amiss; and the East India Madeira—three, four, five—ay, half-a-dozen glasses—may be continued.”

“Ugh, all this may be very well in itself,” growled the patient, reluctantly acknowledging within himself that he was soothed somewhat by having his tastes so indulgently studied; “but,” he added, determining not to evince any such weakness, “I don’t at all see how it is to make me well.”

“Then I am happy to say that I do,” exclaimed the Doctor, in a tone of merry triumph. “What! is it your health of spirits, your cheerfulness of mind, you would see restored, for this is what you ask me to do chiefly for you? And do I not do so?”——

“No, no, no,” interposed the patient, shaking his head sceptically.

“Do I not do so, I say, in telling you, my dear Sir, though with all deference, that ambition, in whose objects you may have been foiled, is all a dream, a mere dream, and not worth your fretting over?—that even in its success, the attainment of happiness is very uncertain and fallacious! While I, on the other hand, put content—ay, enjoyment—positively in your possession, by my mode of treatment!” (The ascetic curled up his lip with a sardonic grin.) “For, mark my words, as we

grow older, the study of our appetites," he continued, with emphasis, "is after all an object of chief importance, and one which we are able most duly to appreciate. As our physical powers flag and fail, the support—the agreeable support—afforded their decay and debility is a gratification positive and undeniable!—a main source of contentment in this wane of life, when all the pursuits of vanity are viewed in their true colours, and recognised as fleeting and shadowy! Here I give you, then, by my 'system,' which I must say," he modestly added, "I never knew fail," — ("Ugh! ugh!" chuckled the cynic, turning himself restlessly in his chair,)—"a certain source of satisfaction, and that, too, which your time of life is best capable of appreciating! And I am happy to say," continued the epicurean Doctor, in a renewed tone of jocular triumph, "I can witness the best effects from my treatment! Depend upon it, we must set up, according to the plan I am pursuing, the physical powers first of all, and then the health of mind too will follow as a happy consequence on their restitution!"

"Have you done?" growled Mr. Howbiggen with characteristic *complacence*; "have you done 'putting the cart before the horse,' as usual?"

But this sally, sour as was its tone, was not permitted to escape the lips of his patient without

being turned to account by the facetious Doctor, as he interposed, "Capital! delightful!—this is precisely the cheerful vein of remark I wish to induce! Be assured, my dear Mr. Howbiggen, that the 'regimen' succeeds wondrously! Take my word for it that the nerves of the brain . . ."

"Pooh! pshaw! I know all you have to say about the affection of the nerves of the brain, resulting in an affection also of the mind; and that on the health, again, of the one depends that of the other. I know all this! I know what you have to say—I have heard this 'jargon'" (the Doctor smiled) "over and over again!—this *crambe repetita* of your 'system,' but . . ."

. . . "Delightful, again;" interposed the Doctor, rising in his tone of good-humoured banter in proportion as his patient was impatient and surly. "This mirthful vein of remark proves you all the while better; and that the regimen has done wond . . ."

"Nothing, I tell you! In fact, you do but waste breath in trying to convince me that I am better and better, when I am myself too conscious that the cause of my malady still exists! What matters it that you tell me, it is an unworthy cause, and originating in a vain and fallacious dream? What, I say, matters that, if the cause, nevertheless, exists, and the ill effects of it remain?

Pshaw! You may talk of ‘correcting the physical habit’ and so forth, but I tell you again, you do but put the ‘cart before the horse;’ for I suppose, you’re aware” (he continued, curling up his lip with a sneer, while the Doctor smiled self-complacently) “that the mind you treat as such a secondary thing,—that the mind, in its disease, pulls awry the body; and in doing so, mocks at all your efforts to set right the ‘physical tone’ (as you express it) or anything connected with this miserable thing of clay, the body!” And the cynic turned away impatiently, while his medical adviser did but continue smiling as he exclaimed, with undiminished glee—“Why this is better and better! Rail at my system as long as you please in words, if you do but prove that in effect it is right and beneficial! Why, you could no more have descanted in this good-humoured, pleasant, light, easy style, on this or any other subject, a short time past, than you could have flown!”

“Pshaw! nonsense, Dr. Esdaile! What matters it, I tell you, that I am a little better at times—just now and then?—make me permanently so if you can! You might as well pretend to do so as to give me back the ten thousand pounds I lost at the election some years back, and the seat in parliament with it for my pains—ugh, ugh—and the sacrifice of all my projects in public life—pshaw!

You might as well pretend to do one as the other. . . . So pray talk no more of your ‘system,’ for Heaven’s sake !” . . . And he again turned away from the wilfully-incredulous Doctor, with a look of contempt and half-anger at the complacency with which the other maintained the merits of his “material system.” In fact, in their principles of difference both may be said to be right to a certain extent; and that both were wrong in the partial view each took of the subject is no less certain. The only answer which Mr. Howbiggen again received was in the same confident strain of unalloyed good-humour as before — “Better and better ! You are, I am convinced, much better ;” and just here the door was opened, and that estimable elderly maiden-lady, Miss Howbiggen, made her appearance as Esdaile turned round, and bowed to her, while he continued, addressing her with reference to his patient, “I am happy, Miss Howbiggen, to be able to pronounce that there is vast improvement in our patient, in spite of his own unwillingness to acknowledge it ! . . . Pulse better . . . tongue clearer . . . complexion brighter . . . eye more sprightly . . . conversation cheerful . . . cheerful in the extreme ! . . . And yet he would quarrel with my system ! . . . Never found him so cheerful !”

“Well, I’m heartily glad,” replied the fair

spinster, with a toss of the head, indicative in some measure of incredulity, if not reproach, towards her cynical brother, "that you have brought him round at last. For my part, I always tell him that he will never be better till he lives less by himself—sees more people—indulges more in the pleasures of social life—and rubs off the rust acquired by this perpetual brooding over the train of his own fretful associations! Yes—rubs it off, I say," (she proceeded, looking at the ascetic, whose lip was curled up in contempt at these indirect admonitions,) "by some interchange of opinions—some intercourse with mankind—and, let me add, some little deference to the tastes and inclinations of others. Ah, brother!" she added, in a somewhat softened tone, "if you could but take the advice I have so often given you, and permitted yourself to be guided by the example of my more social disposition, you would have been a better and a happier man! You would not only have secured cheerfulness for yourself, but contributed to that of the circle around you!"

So far Miss Howbiggen spoke truly; for her brother, ascetic as he had become by habit, had naturally no want of either social feelings or even conviviality of disposition. In fact, in times past his humour and liveliness in conversation had made him much sought after, and the flattery of which

he was sensible on the score of his talent in this particular had perhaps been the first inducement to his enlarging the scope of his ambition by entering on the career of public life, in which he had been disappointed, and had hence lost his original gaiety, having been taught a lesson he had too little philosophy to endure with patience.

Dr. Esdaile exclaimed, as Miss Howbiggen concluded her remarks, that his "regimen" would yet effect everything towards their patient's restoration that was desirable, while that gentleman himself replied to her—

"Ugh, well, then; as I cannot be cheerful, it is better to stay out of the way of people, and keep my unpleasant qualities to myself, rather than mar the happiness of others by souring the more cheerful vein of their thoughts and feelings by my presence—inauspicious as it is." Then turning to Dr. Esdaile, he proceeded, "She is always trying to drag me into what she calls society! This is all she cares about! As for whether I'm well or ill, it is a matter of little consequence!"

Dr. Esdaile laughed, while his sister exclaimed in good-humoured reproach—

"Here's ingratitude, Dr. Esdaile!—this is the way in which he distorts everything that I say, and takes everything by the wrong handle!"

“Oh! this is merely joking!” exclaimed the bantering Doctor; “this is merely facetiousness on Mr. Howbiggen’s part. I assure you, I never found him so improved, so cheerful. I told you we should bring him round—correct the nervous system—restore the physical powers to their right tone—and the result is, ‘mens sana in corpore sano’!”

“Pshaw! ‘corpore sano!’ let us hear no more, Doctor, of your ‘system’ to-day, if you please”——

“Well, then!” interposed Miss Howbiggen, “if you are sceptical as to Dr. Esdaile’s power of curing you, embrace, my dear brother, ‘*my* system,’ socially delightful as it is; for this peculiarly agrees with all your arguments that first of all the mind . . .”

“‘A plague o’ both your houses,’ as says Mercutio!” growled out Mr. Howbiggen, hastily cutting short this attempt on the part of his sister at trepanning him into dining out and card-parties, “So I may say, a plague o’ both your systems! You neither of you can give me back either my ten thousand pounds or restore my lost opportunities! so prate no more about your systems. The twaddle of evening parties or dull dinners would relieve the mind amazingly!” (he added, with a sardonic grin,) “About as much as my

friend Dr. Esdaile's 'regimen'—pooh! pshaw!—my good sister, do not talk about what you don't understand any longer, but leave me to myself."

Dr. Esdaile made little reply to this sweeping censure, but laughed, declaring again "that his system would triumph over all others!" while Miss Howbiggen pronounced her brother "incorrigible," and said that "he only opposed her from the mere love of contradiction," and was forthwith proceeding to take her leave and resume the walk in the grounds round the house which she had been taking when Dr. Esdaile's arrival had called her in doors; but it so happened that she was delayed by the Doctor's starting a subject too engrossing not to engage her attention and arrest her steps.

"You will be happy to hear, since we were speaking of society," (said the little man, grinning with the consciousness of imparting a piece of news that would be particularly acceptable to her of all persons)—"that there is an accession to the social circle in the neighbourhood; a most desirable one too!" and here he opened his eyes, as having delivered an important, no less than agreeable piece of intelligence; while the fair person to whom he imparted it reciprocally distended her lids with surprise no less than pleasure.

"I'm delighted! our circle was so small!—do let us hear the name!" exclaimed the sociable and

society-loving lady, at the same moment that her ascetic brother growled out—"Oh, good gracious! we've 'bores' enough already, without any more!"

Meantime, "the herald of good news," as Miss Howbiggen considered him, proceeded—

"Why, he is no less a person than a certain colonel, of noble family, and a member of parliament to boot!"

"Ugh, a colonel in the army," growled Howbiggen; "that is no great recommendation, when we hear so much of the partial sale of commissions, and promotions by favour of young aristocratic coxcombs, to the exclusion often of the most deserving. Ugh—a member of parliament, too! ugh—that is a title guaranteeing anything but honesty now-a-days!"

Miss Howbiggen, on the other hand, exclaimed, with very different feelings and in a very different strain—

"Delightful! A member of parliament!—and his name?—his name?"

"Colonel Renmore."

"Charming name!"

"Nothing very charming that I can see," muttered her ascetic brother;—"what a fuss you make about any strange person that happens to come into the neighbourhood, and perhaps may merely be passing through it. Why you can possibly require

to increase your circle (as you call it) I can't imagine! I'm sure I don't wish to see this colonel —(what do you call him?) any more than he wishes (I dare say) to see me!"

"And I'm dying to see him!" exclaimed Miss Howbiggen. "Our 'circle' at present is 'no circle at all.' As for Mr. Lawton, the 'squire,' as the country people here call him, he is a very worthy" . . .

. . . "Oh, the 'bore' of a fellow! do not name him," growled out her brother, hastily.

"Nay, indeed he is a very worthy person, but certainly not so all-engrossing as to leave no accession to his society to be wished for. He is almost the only person we have in the neighbourhood, except your 'Genii of the Lake,' Dr. Esdaile; and these are such sublime philosophical persons that they are sometimes a little too lofty to answer the notions of companionship that humbler spirits find more agreeable! . . . Oh! I'm delighted to think we shall have so desirable and distinguished an accession. . . . Pray when did you first see him?"

"Oh, only yesterday evening. I took leave of him this morning and promised to call on him again shortly," replied the Doctor.

"Charming! do make it in your way to look in upon him if you should be able, and express how much pleasure it would give Mr. Howbiggen and

myself if he would favour us with his company to dinner this evening."

Esdaile hesitated for a moment in his reply, calling now to mind, as he did, a little too late, the circumstance of Renmore's appearing to desire to be private.

"Why, what is the matter?" continued the fair spinster, with a tone of eager inquisitiveness; "he surely will scarcely refuse us the pleasure of his company, being a stranger and all alone?"

"That is very true," replied the Doctor, still hesitating; "but I fancy he is a little occupied at present by an arrear of correspondence to constituents and others."

"Oh! dear, dear! that can hardly be. A man must find time to dine, and 'see society.' There is a time surely for all things. I, for my part, could write letters to as many people as any M.P. in the three kingdoms has constituents, and yet find time for seeing my friends and entering into the engagements of 'society!'"

"But this person is no friend of yours or mine, nor knows anything about us!" growled out Howbiggen; "and perhaps does not wish to know anything about us!"

"The greater is the compliment we pay him, then, in shewing him the courtesy of making advances towards his acquaintance, and offering him

hospitality as being a stranger amongst us!" retorted Miss Howbiggen, with a truly becoming toss of the head at her brother's barbarous 'antisocial' tone of thinking.

"Well, all I can say is," resumed Dr. Esdaile, "that if I thought that by returning to the place where he is taking up his abode during his stay here, I could induce him to join me and accept your invitation I should be too happy; but really, I think he would only consider it an interference, after the assurance he gave me that to-day, at least, he was too much engaged to be at liberty to come out. Perhaps to-morrow, or on some future day, he may be less occupied."

"There! now will not that satisfy you?" growled out Howbiggen again. "I'm sure I am in no such hurry to see this 'distinguished stranger'—he, he, he!" he added, chuckling most provokingly.

Miss Howbiggen, taking no notice of this disagreeable speech, continued, with characteristic anxiety, to Dr. Esdaile—

"Some future day! Oh, dear! that is too distant a prospect to satisfy my desire to see our new denizen of these solitary retreats——"

["I dare say!" muttered Howbiggen.]

... "Besides, by that time he may be gone. No, no! we must not put off anything of moment in this life; and it is of moment, in our scanty

circle, to secure so desirable an addition. Therefore, nothing can satisfy me but dispatching a note and our cards, with a view to trying to 'draw out' this distinguished person amongst us this very day. . . . But, dear me! look, Dr. Esdaile, who is that riding by?" she exclaimed, hastening to the window.

"It is the worthy squire of Blacktarn, my esteemed friend, Mr. Lawton; by-the-bye, I ought to call at Blacktarn to see Miss Lawton—she has had a bad cold, and I must inquire——"

But here he was stopped short by Miss Howbiggen, who cried out, "Oh, dear me! I so wish to speak to him—I wish we could stop him!" And here, throwing up the window-sash, she waved a handkerchief, like a distressed damsel of old, under durance vile of giant or ogre, with the hope of catching the eye of the equestrian, when, to her great joy, he reined up his steed, and was soon seen advancing along the gravel-road up to the entrance door.

He had scarcely entered, than Miss Howbiggen, with laudable impatience, hastened to meet him. "Oh, I am so happy to see you, Mr. Lawton! I suppose you have, of course, left a card on Colonel Renmore, the new acquisition, as I trust he will prove, (that is, if we make the proper advances,) to our social circle?"

“He, he, he!” giggled out Mr. Howbiggen, at hearing this, as he just raised up his head in recognition of the entrance of Lawton, while he grumbled out, “Ugh, how d’ye do? How’s Miss Lawton? ugh, ugh?”

“Why, ahem, her cold is on the whole somewhat better—ahem!” replied the lord of Blacktarn, in a pompous and solemn tone, which, as applied to trifles, was somewhat ludicrous in its effect; this, however, was one of his amusing characteristics, and perhaps was not lost sight of by the cynical Howbiggen, when a little while ago he designated Mr. Lawton “a bore.” “Ahem,” (continued Lawton,) “Laura (that was his daughter’s name) caught cold in standing out too long, ahem, witnessing one of my grand improvements, ahem, in the pleasure-grounds”

. . . . “Yes, yes!” ejaculated Miss Howbiggen, hastily, and anxious to cut short the somewhat prosaic Lord of Blacktarn, especially when he was “mounted on his hobby,” (for such it was,)—viz., the topic of “improvements,” as we shall more fully witness hereafter. At present, we shall only remark that, if Mr. Lawton was a “genius” in his way, he was assuredly not one of Dr. Esdaile’s “Genii of the Lake” exactly; but we hear Miss Howbiggen reiterate—“Of course you have left a card——”

“Left a card,—ahem,—a card?” rejoined Lawton, with an air of somewhat ludicrous surprise. “No, no ! I really have not heard till this moment of any colonel—any new acquisition—ahem, or arrival.”

“No, no !” interposed Esdaile, “the colonel only came into the neighbourhood yesterday evening.”

“True, true !” replied Miss Howbiggen, eagerly. “So much the better, however, for our exhibition of readiness to shew him attention. There should certainly be as little time lost as possible in offering it. . . . You will have,” she continued, turning to Lawton, “some interesting news to bear to Miss Lawton——”

[“Interesting news !” giggled out the ascetic.]

“Which is no other than that ‘the Honourable Colonel Renmore, M. P., of the Clan-renmore family, county Caithness,’ is come amongst us. Such a partner for her at a ball, or to hand her in at dinner ! Consider, you will of course exhibit your desire to shew so distinguished a person immediate attention.”

“Certainly,—ahem,—certainly,” replied Lawton, with due solemnity; “pray where is the Colonel residing ? I shall be most happy to leave our cards—Laura’s and mine—with a note, expressing how flattered we shall be—ahem—by the honour of his company to-morrow evening to dinner.”

So saying, Mr. Lawton repaired to the writing-table and penned a note, while Miss Howbiggen took her seat opposite, and penned another, on the part of her brother and herself, as she said to Lawton, "You are doing precisely what I was about to do myself, only your invitation is for to-morrow, mine for to-day! And let me see," (she continued running on, and amusing herself with the dreams of that festivity to which she made sure "the Colonel's" presence would give such new impulse)—"let me see, we shall be able to have a charming party! Yourself and Dr. Esdaile"—(a bow from the Doctor and Mr. Lawton, of course)—"and Miss Lawton——"

["Permit me to ask if Miss Lawton has pursued the regimen I prescribed for her cold?" interposed the Doctor——]

"Wait a moment, Dr. Esdaile," resumed Miss Howbiggen;—"yes; there will be Mr. and Miss Lawton, Dr. Esdaile, that is three; then, your 'Genii of the Lake,' the illustrious 'trio,' that will make 'six;' then Colonel Renmore, seven; and Mr. Fenton, perhaps, (though I can scarcely reckon so certainly on him, for he is at some little distance,) eight; and Mr. Howbiggen and myself, ten. A very nice party!"

"Very nice indeed!" muttered Howbiggen to

himself; "and this is the way I am to have the house turned out at windows, without even being asked how far *I* find it 'nice,' as she calls it, or not. Vastly pleasant—agreeable indeed!"

This interesting calculation on the part of Miss Howbiggen—this most sociable of ladies—was concluded at the same moment that the notes both of herself and Mr. Lawton were achieved. The lady proceeded to ring the bell immediately, in order to dispatch her "billet" on the way of its destiny, when Mr. Lawton assured her, with due solemnity, that he should have much pleasure in leaving it, together—ahem—with his own note, which he should do in calling at the Traveller's Rest. The worthy squire was, in fact, scarcely less eager now than the fair spinster herself, to "draw out" this "distinguished stranger." Of course, in doing so, he had in his eye a desirable acquisition of acquaintance for his daughter; for no doubt, in this solitary district of meers, tarns, and cliffs, acquaintances were scarce, and consequently the more in request, when any such "novelties" offered themselves; and we are giving but a true picture of the "stir" a new arrival occasions in such a district.

Accordingly Mr. Lawton proceeded to take his leave, trusting he might be fortunate enough to find the Colonel at home.

"I doubt that," observed Esdaile; "indoors he may be, I grant you; I think it is very probable; but I doubt whether he will be at home to you or any one. But let me ask once again as to Miss Lawton's cold—I think you said it was better—she has pursued the regimen, of course?"

"Oh, good heavens!" ejaculated Howbiggen, "that everlasting 'regimen!'" . . . and continued, after his manner, to grumble out something complimentary, when his murmuring was drowned in the merry fit of cachinnation which the Doctor raised as he made his escape, and which was not unreadily joined in by the Squire of Blacktarn; more, however, in his instance, at the entertaining moroseness of Howbiggen, than out of any disrespect for the Doctor's "regimen," which indeed Miss Lawton had found fully satisfactory. As for Howbiggen, he was both a "character" and an "invalid;" and as such, was accounted a "privileged person," and all his moroseness was not only taken in "good part," but served as food for entertainment to some, and moralizing to others.

And now Lawton and Esdaile had taken their departure—the first to Blacktarn, of course, stopping at the Traveller's Rest in his way; the last to his residence near Keswick. And thus we have explained the circumstances that led to those invitations which we have witnessed our hero receiving

on his return to the hostelry, as above related. As for Miss Howbiggen, she now continued her walk in no small anxiety and restlessness until the fate of her note should be decided ; all which laudable anxiety was rudely designated by her uncomplimentary and disagreeably candid brother, “ fidget.”

CHAPTER X.

“Go! get thee gone! thou false deluding slave!”

TAMING OF THE SHREW.

ANXIOUSLY indeed did Miss Howbiggen await the arrival of an answer to her invitation. With eager and trembling hand did she break the seal, when at length, and late in the evening, it was placed before her. Her cynical brother had long retired to rest, worn out, in great measure, by his own fretfulness, and in a certain degree by the “fidget” (to use his own term) of his “amiable” sister. As for this excellent spinster, little rest could she hope for, until she was made acquainted with the fate of her attempts at “drawing the Colonel out.” If, then, repose of mind had been banished hitherto by the pain of uncertainty as to the result of her adventure, it was not likely to be much more conceded her by the “bitter certainty” of ill success which the following words now conveyed:—

“Colonel Renmore’s compliments to Mr. and Miss Howbiggen, and regrets he is unable to do himself the honour of accepting their kind invitation, in consequence of engagements that have demands on his time during his very short sojourn in the neighbourhood.

“Mr. and Miss Howbiggen.”

A similar note was received by the denizens of Blacktarn, and excited similar regret with that of Miss Howbiggen, though in a more moderate and softened degree.

The tumult of spirit, the “tantarum” of disappointment experienced by this hospitable spinster, it would be difficult either to imagine or adequately portray.

“Tantalizing and vexatious!” she exclaimed; “What a polite, delightful note! Vexatious that it should be one of refusal! Most disappointing!”

In fact, the polite terms in which “the Colonel” had declined her advances towards “drawing him out” had only the effect of stimulating her anxiety to persevere in that desired object. If she had framed an agreeable image of the distinguished stranger hitherto in her mind, she now arrayed the pleasing picture in yet heightened colours and additional lustre. After walking up and down the room, reiterating the burden “very, very disap-

pointing, and extremely vexatious!" she at last endeavoured to console herself by hopes that on some future day a more satisfactory result of her social advances, as regarded "the Colonel," might be attained. However, another and another day dragged their weary flight along, and still Miss Howbiggen saw no prospect of attaining her desired object. It was to no want of assiduity, certainly, on her part, that this failure was to be attributed; for scarcely had ten days elapsed than she had dispatched nearly half the number of notes, all tending to the same desirable end. But alas! all met with the uniform result of disappointment in their laudable advances. To one, a reply was made of valetudinarianism; to another, that Colonel Renmore "regretted much" he was just setting off on his departure from the place; and bitter was the dismay, and intense the fidget, occasioned Miss Howbiggen by this cruel announcement. Away she sent a servant to the Traveller's Rest, to ascertain if Colonel Renmore had "really taken leave" of the spot; and when she was informed he was still there, she opened her eyes as widely as astonishment could distend them, as she ejaculated, "Well, I must say this is very singular. I cannot imagine what can be the reason Colonel Renmore acts so very much on the defensive, as regards our advances towards him. One

would really think they had been hostile, to find him thus keep us at arm's length. . . . What can be the reason he maintains this strict privacy, and manifests so unaltered a determination to keep to himself?"

"Why, what can it matter to you or me?" her brother would observe, pettishly; "I'm quite sick of this man's name, endlessly as it has been on your tongue since the first moment that blockhead Esdaile mentioned it to you. Can you not take the 'hint' that Colonel Renmore's endless refusal of your invitations offers—namely, that he does not desire to be annoyed with society?"

"Annoyed! Monstrous to hear you speak thus. No, no! there is some secret or another connected with this privacy which it would interest me amazingly to discover. Why! he haunts the place like a spy; he is in it, but not of it. I shall feel quite 'uncomfortable' (really I shall) until I fathom to its depth the whole 'mystery,' for by no other name can I designate it!"

So saying, she left the room to prepare herself for going out, while the pony-phaeton, in which herself and Mr. Howbiggen took their drives, was ordered to the door, but was sent back again, on her sagely determining that a "pedestrian tour" through the village would afford her better opportunities of delaying "where she listed," to make

inquiries concerning the history, character, movements (or it might be, peculiarities), of this mysterious yet courtly stranger. Unsocial in disposition she could not believe him to be, so polite was the style of his address, both as Esdaile had represented it to her and as the style of his notes testified. "What could, then, be the reason of his thus standing aloof—of his perpetual excuses that he was about to leave the spot—that his movements were 'unsettled and uncertain'? . . . And yet still was he there! and still unwilling to meet the advances of sociability and hospitality a stranger is generally so willing to meet, and by which he feels flattered, while he is pleased in evincing his sense of the attentions offered him." To solve the problem, then, of this "mystery," if possible, Miss Howbiggen sallied forth on her portentous way to the village of Buttermere; while her courteous brother's reflections on her errand were somewhat to the following effect:—"Ugh! tiresome it is a man can't be left to himself when he wishes it! ugh, you can't seek a retreat of quiet or privacy a moment, but you must be rummaged out by the worrying civility or impertinent curiosity of some one or another!—bore! plague! pest!"

So thought Mr. Howbiggen, and so sallied forth on her way his "amiably" inquisitive sister; and we may venture to say that no pilgrim, even proceed-

ing to Mecca, ever journeyed with greater zeal than herself. Nor was she animated by a less inciting principle than any pilgrim that ever walked barefoot even, and with pease in his shoes; for assuredly, as far as zeal is concerned, the spirit of religion may be matched by the spirit of curiosity, or call it, if you please, of gossiping. All anxiety to "glean information," she demanded it of the first person that came in her way, on having entered the village. Whether exercised to the purpose or not,—whether with the probable chance of obtaining the desired intelligence or not, seems to have been scarcely of more consequence in this first ebullition of her question-asking errand, than the circumstance of giving some vent to the swelling current of her anxiety, or (call it if you will) her "fidget," which longed to force itself out in words! As chance would so have it, the first person that presented himself was one "Jock," the carrier's man already mentioned as having brought the Colonel's baggage from Keswick. She had now rounded the corner of the lake, and was pursuing the little road, or rather lane, leading to the Traveller's Rest and the village, and at this point she encountered honest Jock. He was plodding his dusty way along, groaning under a heavy "fardel" of baggage which he was conveying (*secundum artem*) from Buttermere to some spot in

the neighbourhood. He wore a smock-frock, and was adorned with a blue cotton neckerchief besides, together with a low-crowned straw hat, with a piece of whip-cord for a band. From beneath his hat-brim hung down some knotted red locks, by way of variety to the straight-smoothed hair at the top of his head.

“ Oh ! ‘you are the Buttermere and Keswick carrier, are you not ?’ ” asked his fair interrogator.

“ No ! ” answered Jock, somewhat waggishly, for he was a blunt and dogged kind of clown, and somewhat of the vein of the ancient Touchstones, piquing himself as he did on the sharpness and pertinency of his answers. “ No, ma’am, I be-ant the carrier, and yet I be the carrier too, and don’t speak falsely neither ! ” So saying, he rested his load against a stump by the wayside, pulled off his straw hat, rubbed his forehead with the back of his hand, and grinned complacently in his fair questioner’s face.

“ Pooh, pooh ! ” she replied ; “ I don’t understand speaking in riddles ! ”

“ Why,” continued our “ Touchstone,” “ in respect I carry the load, I am the carrier ; but in respect I am not the person you would mean, I am not the carrier ; therefore——”

“ Dear, dear ! do speak plainly ! I ”

“ Well then, ma’am, so I will ! and I say I be not the carrier, but—I’m his man !”

“ Well, well, it is all one !” she replied, somewhat fussily ; “ I wished to inquire——”

“ Yees, it is all one ! I wish it were two of us instead of one, to help me with my load !” And here he grinned again in clownish malice, at her apparent impatience at his answers.

“ Well, never mind, my good man, more than one is sometimes one too many ; and——”

“ Yees ! and sometimes one too few, as I find it just now ;” and here he grinned applause over his own clownish conceit, and testified also his amusement at tantalizing Miss Howbiggen, whose character for question-asking, and stopping people with that view, was not altogether unknown in the hamlet.

“ Dear, dear, how provoking the oafish being is ; he will not let me come to what I want to say !” exclaimed the tantalized spinster to herself, when she continued to the “ grin-adorned” Jock—“ There is a gentleman at the Traveller’s Rest——”

“ Yees, I dare say there be ! two or three——”

“ Pooh, pooh ! I mean a certain Colonel Renmore, who I understand is about to quit the spot, if he has not already quitted it ; now, as you are the carrier of the place, I dare say you can inform

me if he is gone, since you might have had to convey some of his luggage possibly? and——”

“Oh Lord! oh Lord, ma’am! you runs on too fast for my poor wit possibly to understand half that you would wish to ask me!” replied Jock, putting on a look of ludicrous dismay and pretended ignorance. . . . “Bless you, ma’am! you put me all in a fluster!”

“Well, Jock——”

“Yes, ma’am,” replied the clown, with pretended officiousness.

“Oafish booby!” exclaimed Miss Howbiggen to herself, much worried at having to deal with a being so “impracticable” as the dogged and malicious clown before her; and the more annoyed was she, since she fancied, from the fellow’s look and manner, that he possessed the desired intelligence, but withheld it purposely from her. At least, she suspected as much, by the malicious self-complacence of his countenance, which, in other and plainer language, may be construed “sauciness.”

“Tell me!” at length she exclaimed, raising her voice, and now rendered quite angry; “Tell me whether the gentleman I mentioned has (as far as you know) left the village or not?”

“Left the village or not, ma’am?” answered

Jock, with an oafish stare of pretended surprise, and his mouth gaping wide at the same time.

“Yes, yes, I ask *you* ! don’t turn my own questions back upon me ! I ask *you*, I repeat ! So speak, my good man, if you have a tongue, and——”

“Why yees, I have a tongue, ma’am ! but it’s so dry at present, that I raly shouldn’t mind wetting it, the better to answer you, if so be you might be kind enough to let me drink your health !”

“Is it even so ? Oh ! you can speak fast enough, I find, when you have anything to ask for !” replied Miss Howbiggen, turning away indignantly from the waggish clown. “No, no, my friend, I do not give anything to idle persons such as yourself, who cannot return a plain answer to a plain question !” So saying, “Miss Howbiggen turned precipitately away from Jock, finding she had taken (to use the humble adage) “the wrong sow by the ear,” her impatience not being allayed by any means by the words which the Buttermere Touchstone spoke, as he resumed his “fardel” and “trudged” on.

“A plain answer, said you, ma’am ? Well now, I thought I spoke plain enough !—he, he—ho, ho—ha !” continued the clown, chuckling to himself, while he proceeded to soliloquize, with an arch leer in his face, “Why, if I had known (as ’tis

like I may) the gentleman's movements, do you suppose I was going to tell you about 'em ? No, no ! go, ax himself, if you want to know ! I only can say, he is a gentleman, every inch on him ; and paid me handsomely for bringing his baggage to the Traveller's Rest, when he first came there, ten days sin', or more ! He would not have heard a poor man say he was dry without treating him to drink his health ! And I'm sure if there ever was dry work it is answering plaguing questions and carrying heavy bundles."

So saying, and with this indirect reflection on the want of liberality in his late questioner, Jock proceeded on his way.

Miss Howbiggen, after having walked onward a little way, stopped for a moment, as she stood tapping the ground impatiently with her foot, and playing with the ivory top of her parasol, while she considered with herself as to which was the best quarter to which she should next address herself. The Traveller's Rest was at hand. " Suppose I go at once to the Colonel's ' head-quarters,' " she said, " and make inquiries there ! "

Accordingly, she had soon cleared the threshold of the porch, and was met by the landlady of the hostelrie, who received her with a most formal curtsy, and begged to ask " What was her pleasure?"

“Oh! only, Mrs. Wetherby, to inquire whether Colonel Renmore has yet left you? since we have a party on Sunday next, and we should have been delighted to have sent a note to try and prevail on him to come and see us, in case he might be still in the neighbourhood.”

“He is still in Buttermere, ma’am; but not at home.”

“There is the cause of our regret! He is ‘not at home’ to any one it seems. Well, well, I’m delighted to hear that he has not left the place absolutely; since we have yet a chance, I trust, of the pleasure of his company! What can be the reason he will not favour us with his société, considering he has now been here some days?”

“Really,” replied dame Wetherby, with a stiffness that was truly formidable, bristling up her chin, and “perpendicularizing” the plaited border of her widow’s cap, just as a fighting-cock bristles up its crest-feathers; “really, I cannot inform you of the Colonel’s reasons for declining invitations—he may be an invalid, or busy. I do not interfere in any such matters, I can assure you, ma’am,—” and here dame Wetherby coolly looked awry, as she added,—“and do not see why others should!”

“Exactly, exactly!” replied Miss Howbiggen, a little thrown “a-back” by this indirect reflection on her own spirit of inquisitiveness, of which Mrs.

Wetherby was too well aware not to be on her guard against it. "Exactly," continued Miss Howbiggen, in a somewhat quickened tone; . . . "I merely wished to make the inquiry which I just suggested, in order not to intrude any more invitations on the Colonel, in case his stay were really so unsettled as he seems hitherto to have considered it. He may, however, possibly prolong his stay, and then the case would be altered. If so, I might venture to send an invitation for Sunday next, should you think he will be still at Buttermere."

"It is impossible for me to say!—Ahem!" . . .

. . . "Perhaps we may have the pleasure of meeting him at church?" . . .

"I really cannot tell!" replied the unbending landlady; "but this I can tell, that it would be well if folks looked forward to going to church for other and worthier objects than falling in with the children of this world!" and as she ejaculated these words, her eyes were upturned in appropriate accompaniment, for the chord of the good dame's sanctimonious propensities had been touched on, by the mention of "church." And now, in her turn, she began to be felt as inconvenient by Miss Howbiggen, as the latter had been felt a moment past by the landlady, who proceeded, in a tone of whining edification—"Ah! it is to hear what lessons the pulpit administers that we ought to go to

church! not to gaze about us! Ah, could you but hear such a preacher as Mr. Quandish! . . .”

. . . “Oh, no doubt—no doubt!” replied Miss Howbiggen, hastily; “and by-the-bye, how is the worthy chapel minister?” she added, in a tone of conciliation, by way of removing the former unfavourable impression made by her spirit of inquisitiveness, for she was aware how much an ally Quandish was of dame Wetherby. . . . “I really must hear him preach some day.”

“Ah, it would do you good to hear him! It is now more than a week since I heard him!”

“Indeed—has he been out of Buttermere?”

“Yes, has he, for some days past; but be he where he may, he is ever ‘seeking the Lord,’ and walking in the path of righteousness! Oh, what a ‘sweet discourse’ his last was; the text was from Corinthians. He preached for three hours all but seven minutes. . . .”

. . . “Oh, yes! I remember hearing about it in the village.” [“Thank Heaven, I was not amongst the congregation,” she added to herself.] “I must certainly hear him some day—so good morning, Mrs. Wetherby! Good morning!” she continued, making a curtsy, and bustling out at the porch, as well pleased to escape the infliction of the “dame’s” sanctimony and powers of “prosiness” as Mrs. Wetherby had lately been

to shake from her shoulders the load of interrogation which Miss Howbiggen was ever so ready to impose.

“Not at all nearer the mark!” exclaimed the provoked lady, once more abroad on the field of discovery. . . . “Cannot learn the cause of the mysterious conduct I want so much to have explained! . . . But, dear me, who is this advancing towards the inn—this old man?” . . . And then looking attentively at the person in question, she added, “It is old Mike! . . . Just the person I should think likely to solve the problem! He knows everything, and may well be accounted a wizard by the innocent vulgar of Buttermere and its neighbourhood!”

So saying, she advanced hastily up to the “ancient mariner,” who eyed her somewhat askance, wondering why he was honoured with a greeting, the air of which betokened so much eagerness. “She has something to ask me about,” muttered the old man to himself. “I can see it by her countenance! There is not a spoon stolen, or a rogue to be found out, or a village love-match afoot that old Mike is not consulted! though this last errand is not that on which Miss Howbiggen is come, I should think! . . .”

“Good morning, Mike! glad to see you so well!”

“Thank you, ma’am! thank you!” said Mike,

doffing his seal-skin cap (heretofore described), and passing on in order to escape the suspected interrogatory.

“ Oh, pray stop a moment, Mike !—pray stop ! I wanted to ask you——”

[. . . “ I thought so !” muttered Mike to himself. Now I wonder what it can be she wants to ask me of all people in the world ?” . . .]

. . . “ If you don’t think it uncommonly strange that Mrs. Wetherby’s new guest, here, at the Traveller’s Rest, should have been in the place so long and should refuse to see any one in it !”

“ No, not at all strange,” muttered Mike again to himself, . . . when he added aloud, in his usual wild and mysterious way, . . . “ Oh, it is strange, no doubt ! what of that ? All life is a ‘ riddle,’ and full of strange chances, accidents, and adventures ! I have seen some strange things in my day, and known some strange spirits too !”

“ Dear me, Mike, you frighten me ! And your look of significance when you say so would almost make me believe what the people say—namely, that you hold commune with spirits of another world than this ! But to turn from this subject to that of the shyness of this distinguished gentleman in question.”

“ Shyness !” muttered Mike again to himself, repeating her words, without, however, answering

her question. "Shyness! ay, it must be pretty strict if the eye of fate does not search it out sooner or later!"

. . . "What are you talking about, Mike?" interposed Miss Howbiggen, with an air in which her tacit dread or awe of the speaker prevailed over the ordinary impatience of her inquisitiveness. Mike still continued to "dream aloud" to himself, either voluntarily desiring to put her inquisitiveness aside, which is more than probable, or absorbed in the reflections which arose in his mind. Perhaps both conditions of mind were experienced by the "wizard mariner" on the present occasion.

"I've wandcred many a mile and through many an outlandish clime, and when I least expected it, the person I thought of and wanted to see has run up against me! And so is it the other way. Do what we will to avoid a suspected evil, there is a fatality that forces us right upon it, when we least dreamed that the blow was falling! . . . Well, well! we're poor helpless things! Heaven, ha' mercy on us all!" and he shook his hoary locks, apparently too much absorbed to think of the presence of Miss Howbiggen, who, at length losing her patience, regarded the old man with a look of mingled surprise and awe, as she exclaimed, "It is of no avail! I can make nothing of him any more than of the provoking oaf Jock, or the demure

widow Wetherby! . . . Good morning to you, Mike, since you cannot resolve the doubt!" she added, as she now took her leave of the ancient mariner.

The old man raised up his head hastily—"Good morning, good morning,—God be wi' you!" and then, after she was gone some little distance, his countenance lost its meditative cast and assumed a look of concern and significance, as he bent his glance on her track, while he remarked, "And it is thus the wind sets! I have known a worse evil than tiring a man's patience arise from a spirit of inquisitiveness on the part of a chattering curious woman! I have known many a little beginning the cause of 'mighty sorrow!' This woman will not be satisfied till she has set inquiry on foot to pry into the boy's movements! . . . 'Boy,' I call him, for did I not know him as a boy—ay, from infancy. . . . Well, well! It is but the old chronicle of human mischief repeated! . . . A woman lost all humankind Paradise, and won him a heritage of pain! A woman set the world at loggerheads, years on years ago, at a place they call Troy, as I've been told! A woman. . . . Well," he added, still bending his glance on the pertinacious spinster's track. . . . "A weak instrument for fate to work by!—but why not that as well as a fiercer one, if the end must be so? Well,

be it as it may, it is not Mike shall betray him. Nay, have I not cause to befriend him? but that is a long tale." . . .

And so saying, after a pause, Mike trudged onwards, wrapt in these his meditations, and muttering to himself. With respect to the words that we have just heard escape him, purporting that he was under some obligation to our hero, and consequently unwilling to whisper any secrets he knew of him, we shall have an opportunity of learning what was meant in good time from his own lips, no less than from the disclosures of our story: at present, we will return to Miss Howbiggen; and pursue her on the way of gossip—or, it may be, as Mike would whisper—of fate.

"It is plain," said this lady to herself, "that this old man knew more about the subject of my inquiry, or else he would have evinced some curiosity! Certainly so! I am confident of it! . . . Everything confirms me in the suspicion there is some mystery in the matter; and though I may not solve it, yet there is no harm in 'just stepping down' the village and trying my chance of finding some one who may possibly happen to set me a little at rest on the subject!"

Accordingly, with this admirable spirit of perseverance, or rather pertinacity, Miss Howbiggen proceeded on her "eventful way."

CHAPTER XI.

“ Not I for love or duty,
But seeming so for my peculiar end.”

SHAKSPEARE.

THE pale shadows of a row of yew-trees cast a yet more forbidding hue on the countenance of a person descried pacing slowly beneath them, darkened as his aspect already was with the bad passions portrayed in it. His brow was bent downwards, and his eye fixed on the ground, while his whole air and feature testified that he was engaged in some deep and anxious “self-commune.” The natural “pent-house” of the lid was yet more protruded over the eye by the frown with which the brow was contracted; but had you passed suddenly by him, and he had raised up his head to see who it was that intruded on his cogitations, you would have shrunk back in disgust, and distrust too, at the wily search of the eye that peered craftily forth

from under the lid, speaking some bad design. You would have witnessed with a sense of both loathing and apprehension the feature and its expression too. The eye was of a sulky, washy-looking hue, as it appeared when more dilated, though generally from the scowl of the brow, it was too deeply imbedded for you to perceive its colour; nor did it awaken in you much inclination to look on it more, after having been first of all met by the repulsiveness of the general expression. Did you ever, reader, witness a rattlesnake? if you ever did, you will have remembered the leaden appearance of the eye, looking more like a drop of venom distilled into the socket, than a vital lens reflecting the light of day. It renders the reptile a very personification of venom. Its appearance alone is a dose of liebenon—and of such deadly hue and character was the eye of the sinister-looking being that now meets us, where he paces under those yew boughs. This solitary avenue of funereal stems, intermixed with other trees, fringed a walk at the back of the village, and ran along an ascent which had in view the hills on one side, and the meer in the hollow below; while between these, the Traveller's Rest and the village spread stragglingly before the eye. No spot could be more lovely than the village of Buttermere seen from the eminence where the

person before us was now pursuing his meditations. The blue smoke floating upwards through the trees, amidst which the cottages were at once interspersed and nested—the village echoes too—the murmur of voices—the din of the blacksmith's hammer, or woodman's axe—the clamour of the merry children—as these sounds came borne along on the breeze that blew freshly up from the meer, all those rustic scenes and voices offered a tribute of charm to the eye and ear! But few were the pleasurable associations that either those village scenes or sounds awakened in the breast of the person before us! As the few broken and hasty sentences of his cogitations fretfully escaped him, they ran thus—"Very strange I should have not yet come up with him!—I've been lurking about Keswick this week past and more, and yet—no signs of him! though I am confident that it was somewhere in that direction his flight was taken!—I have made all inquiries as to who has entered, and who has quitted the place; and no one could I hear of but this Colonel Renmore, whose name is a sufficient guarantee for his respectability! This gentleman is, moreover, at dame Wetherby's—and her I should be cautious not to offend by suggesting suspicious inquiries relative to any one under a roof so respectable; besides," . . . and here the person thus cogitating

started at the sound of a rustling noise, as of female drapery ; while he suddenly composed his countenance, and smoothed away the frown which had contracted his brow, as he said in a subdued and somewhat fawning tone, while his look at the same time bore all the humility and assumed sincerity imaginable. . . . “ Hah ! is it the good Miss Howbiggen that I have the pleasure of recognising ? I was lost in those meditations which no man who takes on himself to give counsel of godliness to others should forget !—namely, to commune with his own heart ! sift his own actions ! and consider how far he himself is ‘ worthy ’ in the sight of Heaven ! ”

And here he uttered a sigh, while his eyes glanced downwards and looked askance, rendering his countenance yet more revolting, if possible, under this new phase of expression, than it had been when disfigured with the malign frown it wore a moment ago. In spite of the meekness that the drawn-down corners of the mouth were intended to exhibit, there was malice lurking in them ; just as in the pretended slumber of the tiger, whose savageness is only watching for the moment when it may best spring upon its victim. With respect to the other features of his face, though we can add nothing that can render it more forbidding, as regards the sinister and malign expres-

sion of the countenance, (in spite of its Pharisaical veil of "outward righteousness,") we will just fill up the picture by saying that the hair was a light, "unwholesome" red, and both on the head and in the whiskers was scant and jejune. The complexion of the face was livid, and marked with the small-pox; while, to add to the sinister expression of his countenance, the nose was somewhat on one side, and the lip was habitually drawn up either on one side, or both lips were distended straight in the forced smile which, thus varying in character, spoke the same hidden purpose of the heart, that too little responded to the assumed guise of the outward feature.

"Good Mr. Quandish," for such indeed was the person in question, "I fear I have interrupted you in your meditations," replied Miss Howbiggen to the salutation just witnessed of the *soi-disant* dissenting preacher. "You have been a stranger in Buttermere, I am informed by Mrs. Wetherby, for this week past and more?"

"There are sheep to be looked after in other places besides Buttermere," replied this pattern of probity, with due sanctimoniousness. "The fear of Tophet made my sinful brethren of Keswick cry aloud for my ghostly aid. I felt myself bound in all duty to hasten to their aid. Yea! if I had been thrice the distance, I should have

gone forth unto them, to fight the good fight against the evil One. . . . But of the worthy widow, Mistress Wetherby, how say you, does she well?"

"Ay, does she ! except that I could glean no intelligence from her concerning the movements of a gentleman I have a singular desire to learn something more about."

"What gentleman? what gentleman?" asked Quandish, forgetting for the moment his solemn and slow manner, in the eagerness he felt to catch at any information he might possibly gain concerning the topic which we not long ago witnessed as engrossing his thoughts.

"Oh ! it was merely that as a stranger of distinction has come into the neighbourhood, we wished to shew him all hospitality, which, however, he as diligently repels, excusing himself as busy at one time, ill at another, and uncertain in his movements at all times,—umph !—very strange, is it not?"

"And who is he? who is this? Verily, it doth at first sight appear strange."

"A distinguished person,—you have of course heard his name, Colonel Renmore."

"Yes, I have heard his name. He is a scion of a noble house, and one of our legislators, so sayeth Mrs. Wetherby, — if he of a truth," added

Quandish to himself, "be indeed the person he describes himself as being." And here a gleam of satisfaction played over his countenance, as a thought arose that the person we have above heard him express he was looking for might possibly be nearer than he at first imagined.

"He is in Buttermere still?" asked Miss Howbiggen, with an inquiring air; for though she had learned this piece of intelligence, she pretended ignorance of it by way of eliciting further information if possible.

"I know not his movements, nor those of any man!" (replied Quandish,) "not I! I meddle not in other men's concerns. Nay, ask not me, good lady; I know not truly. . . . but," he added to himself, "I will not be long before I do know. Is it possible that I should actually have gone away to Keswick from the spot where the fox had taken cover? Umph! it can hardly be so."

"You seem wrapped in some anxious consideration, Mr. Quandish," observed Miss Howbiggen; "no doubt you are struck with the singularity of the circumstance I have mentioned, that there should have been any gentleman in the neighbourhood who should think proper to live so much to himself."

"Oh no! not at all, madam—this was not the subject on which my thoughts were occupied. I

was ruminating on worthier and more important considerations than this stranger. Alas, alas ! it was, how many were strangers to the works of grace and goodness, which I would feign in my humble function urge them to turn unto. . . .”

But here Miss Howbiggen began to be a little impatient again, finding that the preacher, the “good man,” ran away from the topic that interested her, to those which (as she supposed) interested himself. She could not blame him ; he only acted with the same spirit of self-love with which all humankind act,—with the total inability for ever exemplified of placing ourselves in the situation of others, and viewing things in the same light or through the same medium with them. Perhaps it was the “worthy Quandish’s” object to get rid of the equally “worthy” spinster, knowing how little able her characteristic impatience would be to bear up against a battery of sickly sanctimony. If such were indeed the case, this pretended pattern of godliness fully achieved his design, and proceeded running on in the same pious strain, his eyes the while fixed pertinaciously on the ground, till he found at length the coast clear, and himself rid of the incumbrance (as he felt it at present) of the inquisitive spinster’s company. He even pretended to be too much absorbed to take notice of the thrice repeated, “Good morning, Mr.

Quandish,” which she ejaculated as she took leave. He did rightly, since with talkative persons the least word uttered is a hinge for them to hang an hour’s conversation upon, and often at the time when it is most irksome to submit to it. He was scarcely by himself than he exclaimed, “Is it possible that this name, ‘Colonel Renmore,’ after all, is but another courtly style to disguise our fugitive? for none but distinguished names suit this accomplished felon. Ha! ha! my friend, have I been beating for you close round the burrow, but have not unearthed you yet? . . . What! you have left off your late name of Manners, Hope, &c.? . . . To think I should have turned back to Keswick at the very time, the very next day, to look for the fugitive Manners, as I thought he yet called himself, whom I imagined to be there, while he was in this very spot under a new *nom de guerre*, as the French have it. So, gallant Colonel, it is thus you have ‘stolen a march’ on me; but we shall soon come up with you,” he continued, as he pushed his hat resolutely down on his brow, and buttoned his outer vestment tighter across his chest, with the air of one who braces himself up to some feat of strength or labour. . . . “Yet,” he added, “after all I may be mistaken, this person may really be the Colonel Renmore that he describes himself as being,—a well-known and distinguished member

of society. No matter, no time shall be lost in explaining Miss Howbiggen's 'mystery,' and my own." So saying, he strode away in the direction of the Traveller's Rest, his mind outstripping his step in its eagerness to be at the spot. And as the varied thoughts of triumph at one moment, and doubt at another, rose in his mind, his lip was, now, curled in a scornful and self-complacent smile, and, now, succeeded by the same frown of impatience and malice which distorted his features on our first meeting him.

CHAPTER XII.

“Though the seas threaten, they are merciful.”

TEMPEST.

“The game is done! I’ve won, I’ve won!”

Quoth She.”

COLERIDGE’S ANCIENT MARINER.

QUANDISH was not the only one of our “dramatis personæ” who was now making his way for the village hostelrie. Honest Jock, the carrier, who has been witnessed not long ago as leaving Miss Howbiggen so dissatisfied with his answers, was also plodding in that direction, having left his fardel at the spot where he had to take it. He was making his way by the meer bank, when a loud clamour of voices arose from a crowd of villagers, reiterating the words, “Here he is! let us follow him! here he is!”

While Jock was yet looking round towards the crowd to discern the cause of the clamour, he was

hastily accosted by a person with an angle-rod in his hand, who asked him in a hurried and anxious accent—

“Who is it those people are calling after? whom are they following?”

“Why, your honour, answered Jock, doggedly, “it is one whom you wont easily forget when you’ve once seen him.”

“Very possibly,” was the reply, “but that conveys little information to me as to who he is.”

“Why, it is one,” replied our Touchstone, in his usual style of evasive waggery, “that I had rather meet with a crowd about him than alone.”

“Well, well, I have no doubt you are very well acquainted with him and his character, my good fellow, but not so myself; therefore, without more riddles on the matter, let me hear.”

“Why, who should it be, then,” exclaimed Jock, yielding at length to the tone of quiet command in which “the gentleman with the angle” addressed these last words to him,—“who should it be but old Mike.”

“Old Mike is it, indeed, ay? I don’t wonder at his having such a crowd collected round him, since I understand his adventures are so eagerly listened to.”

“Ay, that they be, Sir; and if I had a sixpence to spend at dame Wetherby’s tap,” proceeded the

waggish clown, "why, I would e'en follow the rest on 'em after the old man up to the inn,—for it is there they are all going, I see." And here Jock appeared to be very busily searching in his pockets for the desired "tester," but with poor success. He was, however, relieved by the benign manner in which his hint was taken, as Renmore, for it was himself, replied—

"The want of a sixpence shall not deter you from going, my good friend; here!" so saying he extended to Jock the desired largess which was to enable the clown to drink his health; and Jock having now "made his leg," and plodded off to join the rest of the crew, Renmore was left to himself.

"Bless me!" he exclaimed, "I could not help thinking it was myself they might possibly be denouncing, when they clamoured out 'here he is!' . . . And so," he continued, "it is old Mike. Unlike this poor clown who would dread to meet the village wizard alone, I wish to do so, and learn all that his second sight, or rather his calculations on the future, founded on his knowledge of the past, have to impart to me. . . I will by-and-by, when the shadows have a little deepened, proceed to the inn. Perhaps the crowd will have dispersed by that time. It is safer to keep aloof a little while longer." So saying, he retraced his steps along the meer bank with his angle-rod in his hand, the

pursuit of fishing being one of those pretences he was obliged to assume before dame Wetherby, and her few rude retainers at the inn, as appearances of the manner in which his time was past. Leaving him, then, pursuing his way under the cliff brows that overshadowed the meer, we will return to the Traveller's Rest, in order to join Quandish again, whom we now find seated at Mrs. Wetherby's tea-table, but accompanying her more sober cups with the stronger libation of brandy infused in the water instead of tea. In fact, "tea-totalism" would have been at a discount with our preacher had he lived at the present day; but, however, since "to the pure all things are pure," the strength of the godly Mr. Quandish's potation had an innocent characteristic about it, which there was no questioning. In fact, his piety wore a more heightened feature in the estimation of Mrs. Wetherby when he spoke of "fortifying the frail tenement," with other such sanctimonious jargon; and she would remark with pious concern, "that, doubtless, too much labour in the good fight" had much worn him down. Thus religiously, then, did this respectable pair betake them, the one to a ponderous old-fashioned tumbler of the above-mentioned spiritual beverage, the other to a small china cup, also of the taste of the old day, filled with the less ardent infusion of bohea.

The preacher was, as may be imagined, all anxiety to proceed with his inquiries relative to the object of his recently awakened suspicion; but, as was his custom, he first of all inquired, with due devotion, after the "rose of Sharon," as he used to term his hostess's lovely daughter.

"She should now be almost bringing her kine in to their milking," replied dame Wetherby; "but you speak too kindly of her, Mr. Quandish, too kindly of her, considering how she has repulsed you. Call her rather a 'tare of the field' than a rose of Sharon, or of any other place, as long as she is one of the stiff-necked and rebellious generation."

"'Good for evil, good for evil,' would I ever return, Mrs. Wetherby," (ejaculated the preacher, sighing forth the most sanctimonious nasal dole,)—"good for evil is ever my return; but let us address ourselves to talk on more indifferent subjects, for this one doth too much move me; . . . and let me inquire, then," he continued, after a moment's pause, "how fares the gallant gentleman whom I understand to be under your roof: much occupied, I presume?—or, peradventure, but a valetudinarian; since I am informed he is much sought after by the gentry around, and yet will not go forth from his solitude to meet them; perchance he is even now within your doors, and"

But his words were here suddenly cut short by that same clamour of voices already mentioned as exclaiming, "Here he is! let us follow! let us follow him!" This occasioned both Quandish and the landlady to look out at the entrance porch, when they saw a number of village children and peasants, both men and women, thronging round an old man who seemed to be approaching the little hostelrie. The same scene presented itself to them as that which Renmore and honest Jock saw from the meer bank.

"It is old Mike," said Mrs. Wetherby, recognising him by his silvery locks and weird aspect. "The children can never see him or let him pass without begging a 'story' of him."

"It is old Mike, is it?" replied Quandish, shrinking back at the information, as his lip quivered, and his countenance momentarily assumed a more deadly paleness, as though he had some latent reason for dreading the recognition of the weird mariner, though what this might be we are as yet unable to divine. "It is old Mike, is it? Strange that the children should not be afraid of such a wizard-looking old being as he is, since older persons than themselves are!" . . . he muttered, eyeing the weird mariner askance, and with an aspect as little assured as it was either friendly or pleased, while now the old man approached the

porch. In fact, he had, after his interview with Miss Howbiggen in a preceding chapter, proceeded on his way to the Traveller's Rest.

"Oh! he is a mighty favourite amongst the children," replied dame Wetherby. "I know not how others may like him, though I fancy all consider it best to keep well with him. Some say he is half a wizard, or mad; be this as it may, he has seen a deal of the world, and a marvellous number of strange sights, Mr. Quandish; and woe betide the man who is his enemy, or who provokes his displeasure!"

"Indeed!" replied Quandish, in a tone of half surprise, more pretended than real, and half apprehension. "Ay! no doubt it is so. I have heard he is not a common sort of character to deal with. But here he is in the porch, followed by the whole village troop at his heels. Verily, all the heathen are bursting in upon us. No Midianitish dancing-girl ever collected a more profane or numerous crowd around her than this village wizard."

Though these words were muttered in a low growl by the surly and secretly alarmed hypocrite, they were not altogether so inaudible as not to reach the quick ears of old Mike, who had by this time seated himself on one of the side benches or "settles" within the porch.

"Profane call you the poor things," he re-

torted, "who have followed the old man to hear a small bit of his perilous story. There may be those who wear a garb of sanctity that yet may conceal a heart more (much more) profane than any here." And as he said these words, he looked with a regard of scorn and reprobation on the hypocrite, as the latter skulked back to the side room from which he had emerged, withdrawing his eyes at the same time from the keen and confounding glance of the "weird man." "Curses on this interruption," said the hypocrite to himself as he ground his teeth; "just as I had introduced the subject of this Renmore to the foolish woman here, in order to arrive at such confirmation of my suspicions as I fancied she could afford me, when in comes this inauspicious mariner, or wizard, or whatever he is. His presence is dangerous to me, so I will away at once, and seek another opportunity of coming across this suspected 'Colonel.' "

So saying, Quandish stole away from the Traveller's Rest as furtively, and scarcely less expeditiously than he came, cursing the interruption of old Mike again and again in his heart.

Meantime, the crowd of villagers and children had besieged the porch, nothing abating of their good-humoured clamours for "a story" from old Mike.

"Wait a bit! wait a bit! ye little noisy ones," said the old man as he took a little flaxen-haired

urchin on his knee, and smoothed down his glossy hairs which the wind had blown about in all directions. "Wont ye let an old man take breath awhile, after hunting him for a quarter of an hour's good walk? Wait a bit, ye little rogues!"

The landlady here came into the porchway, greeting the old man as she administered to him a can of her best ale, being glad on all occasions to conciliate him, and regarding him with the same superstitious awe with which he was contemplated by the whole rude populace round.

"You have walked far, friend Mike, and I am glad you have chosen a seat at the Traveller's Rest as your "resting" place too. Stand away, children! stand away! and don't crowd so into the porch."

"Thank ye, dame; thank ye," replied Mike as he raised the can to his lips. "Here's success to the Traveller's Rest; and after a weary voyage, a wanderer over the world could not wish for a more snug haven than the inside of its threshold; but don't drive the poor things away; I like to see them—I owe my life to a child," he added, with one of those looks fraught with mystery and meaning that was usually the forerunner of one of those "wondrous recitals" that had made him an object of curiosity throughout the neighbourhood, and won him the reputation of a wizard.

"Owe your life to a child?" cried four or five

voices at one and the same moment, as the peasants from whom they proceeded took their pipes from their mouths, left their cans on the table, and rushed from the tap-room close by the entrance to the porchway, joining their acclamation to that of the children who were now more loudly than ever crying out for the expected story.

The old man sat for a few moments as if wrapped in deep contemplation, his cup still held in his hand and withdrawn from his lips, as if taken away in the act to speak. To look at the countenances of the rude group, betokening mingled fear, marvel, and expectation at what should fall from the charmed lips of the weird mariner, was a study for a painter; and if amongst the rest of the group, Quandish had remained skulking in the background with his coarse and pallid features, lit up by the slant gleam of light that shot from the porchway into the passage, the picture would have been complete; but he was gone.

The gaze, meantime, of innocent and infantine wonder that characterized the children was interestingly contrasted with the look of mingled sorrow and the deep meaning of painful experience that marked the furrowed brow of the village wizard. This contrast of expression was yet more strong and marked than even was afforded by that of features—by the bright glancing eyes first

directed on the old man, and then on one another, of the youthful group ;—by their flowing curls too and glossy golden locks,—in opposition to the sunken eye, the weird and haggard look, and silvery hairs of the aged seaman. The older peasants, too, of both sexes thronged around him not less anxiously than the children. At length he broke silence—

. . . . “ It was a fearful and a weary way, and the ship drifted, day after day, before a keen wind, and amidst floating masses of ice, while famine and the numbing polar chill rendered every brow livid, and cast its fetter on every limb. Yet still that woman . . . methinks I see her now . . . that Egyptian woman laughed as she clasped the child she held to her bosom. . . .

“ The sun waned blood-red through the gloom, and fainting forms were gasping around her on the deck—but still she laughed—the maniac thing! She laughed, and strained that child to her heart, as if she held a seraph-birth in her arms, and with it a talisman of safety, and a guardian from peril. . . .

“ Life was just sustained in the crew ; the limited and scant pittance allotted to us was every day being reduced ; the drifting ice-masses no longer afforded the vessel a passage,—I sat gloomily awaiting death, as the terrible peaks of ice rose overtopping her, and straining against her tim-

bers, till they cracked and groaned through every plank. . . . Yet it was madness to turn to that woman, and mark her joy, her assurance of safety in the midst of peril so fearful, and in sight of death so imminent. . . .

“Her wild dark eye lightened in a sort of frenzied exultation, as one would reproach her with madness—another express that death was at hand—another feebly ask, in her hearing, for the food he was perishing for the want of,—it was madness, I say, to hear her wild laugh, and view her terrible glee, as she watched with wan, yet triumphing aspect the dangers that surrounded us, and to tell us yet to be of good heart, and droop not!

“I know not how it was, I looked at her as a superior being, and drew comfort from her words involuntarily, though my hopes dared not trust in their fulfilment. I gazed on her and on those relentless masses that hemmed us in, and menaced us with a grave, where the ice of death was not more obdurate (at least, I could scarcely deem so in my pain) than that ice-chill which already inflicted on us the pain of a living death, whose terrors were only heightened by the prospect of an impending death-doom.

“I sate watching the masses and the frore and dazzling white mist that played over them, and amused me with the rainbow colours that lit up a

vast web of splendour over those icy walls of the overhanging crags, as the sun streamed over them, and I forgot, while gazing on the miracle of their beauty and magnificence, the terror that they menaced. . . . While I gazed, a crash, as though the sound of some mighty engine, shook the ship to her inmost hold, and roused me from my dream to the sensation of fear, which I, in unison with all my comrades, now felt, being under the impression that at length our doom was arrived—that at length our bark had foundered. But blessed be Heaven . . . it was not so ! And while the echo of that crash died sullenly away, we heard the maniac laugh of that Egyptian shrilly tell forth its joy, and its triumph too, over our fears, as the mighty ice-mass seemed to stalk, as it were, past us, and float majestically on, while our ship, like a courser disengaged from the tighter rein that has curbed him, bore gallantly forward, and held her way through the loosened masses of ice, as if steered by some unseen and divine hand—as if wafted by some mystic and spiritual agency—till once more she bounded unimprisoned and uncircumscribed over the free and mighty expanse of the ocean deep !

“ We looked on that woman as something of fatal, blessedly fatal, and charmed birth ! There were some of the gazers that could have worshipped her, while all crowded round her (as you do now

round me) to know, whence she had drawn the high hope which had been so strangely verified?—whence it was that she drew the auspices that cheered her to laugh in triumph, while every heart beside sank in its fear—a fear which was a mockery to her unearthly and strange merriment!

“She held up the child to us, which had drawn nourishment from her breast. ‘There is a mark on his brow—ye may see not—but I see! . . . There is a sign on his forehead, inscribed by a hand unseen, that ye may interpret not, but which I divine! . . . Were your bark to shiver to fragments on the blind rock!—were the rage of the elements to battle for its destruction, (sea with sky, wind with wave, contending!) yet they should not prevail! Where this infant head reposes over this wild, far billow, safety for you rests! It may lay its head amid the distraction of this watery roar gently as on the pillow of this breast, for harm nor wreck can reach it here! . . . Danger may one day hem its path. I see through the dim vista of years bitter trials for which its destiny shall cruelly preserve it! Fear not! the walk of ocean is a safe path to it, and to you! that destiny, even now, carries on its unutterable and fearful work! Looking still to the future, piercing the gloom impervious to mortal eye, it regards this infant head—it shields it with fearful

care, the care of a parent—and all that move near it! It extends over it that “cruel” preservation even now! Ask not why I say “cruel”—it is enough for me to know—it will be enough for this future sufferer to know! Ye cannot call it so, for ye are safe; and no mortal steersman led ye out of the horror and the bonds of those icy mounds, and snatched death from your helm.’

“We gazed on her in silent astonishment, and eyed the infant with a mixture of fear and curiosity that determined me never to lose sight of it, in order to witness whether the Egyptian’s words should be brought to pass through time. I scarce had the power to withdraw my gaze from the child, for a secret presentiment told me” . . . and here the old man involuntarily started as Renmore’s form presented itself in the passage leading from the back of the house, by which way he had entered. Fortunate for him had been his delay, as far as avoiding Quandish’s scrutiny. Emboldened, at length, by the growing shadows, he had retraced his way to the hostelry, and on his entrance, hearing what was going on, he had stolen forward to listen. From his superior height he was able to look over the heads of the whole peasant herd that thronged both the interior of the passage near the entrance and the porch without,—the centre of the group of Mike’s auditors was occupied by the

children. He had scarcely fixed his eye on Mike than that of the latter at once was attracted to his own, and each gazed on the other for a moment spell-bound, when Renmore removed his ken and retired a few paces back, and more into the shadowy part of the passage, while the old man, having now recovered from his momentary surprise, continued his tale, ever and anon directing a significant glance towards our hero. . . . “I was saying,” he continued, “a presentiment told me I should bear a part in the events of his future fortunes; I sought to question the ‘fatalist,’—the Egyptian,—on his birth, his parentage. . . . ‘And why art thou here, and whence is it thou hast ventured over the deep with that helpless burden?’ I asked; nor had time to catch more from her than the words, ‘Who can read destiny, nor wish to see it fulfilled? who can draw the veil from the secrets hid from mortal vision, nor would wish to prove the truth of that which his prophetic reading promises? Such was my fatal yearning! Such the truth *I* have learned! . . . ask no more.’ But these words were scarcely uttered than their last accents were drowned in the hoarse murmurs of the wind that sprang up. Yet a dim line on the horizon bespoke that land was now just descried, and to some it afforded hope that though the storm had arisen, they should yet be able to reach shore,

ere famine and tempest had quite done its work on them. Some, less sanguine, gave way again to their fears, and exclaimed, ‘The bitterness of death is doubled! with the haven in sight we must yet meet with destruction! Is it for this we have been saved from the by-gone peril! Our preservation was surely but mockery.’ . . . And well had those who spoke thus cause for their dread . . . for it seemed as if the elements fought for the bitter prize of our destruction,—it seemed as if some spirit of ill exercised its rancour in contending for the doom of our ship and every terror-stricken being she contained. Woe worth the hour! I shall never forget it,—how the lightnings seemed to dart through the gloom, as if to shew the phantom of death on his way to snatch us. Woe worth the hour! I am yet bewildered with the deafening roar of the waves as they rose mountain high and dashed over our decks. . . . Without mast or sail our hulk drifted on, reeling like a drunken being with its helpless freight—ourselves and our lamentations. . . . But a lightning streak has lit up one countenance, which pale in its deep resolve* looked forth on the black and turbid water—looked round on our shuddering and bewildered forms, and smiled! While in the sinking

* Palluit audax, the most beautiful picture in Horace: it represents Europa.

murmur of the blast, ever and anon that wild shout of unearthly glee—that fearful laugh as though braving the elements—as though mocking their threat and angry roar—arose. That brow of resolve, that laugh of confidence, were those of the Egyptian . . . and away the vessel scudded fearfully before the wind. I could have stood and gazed on her for ever, forgetful even of the din and distraction around me, when all consciousness of my condition was drowned by the violence of the storm with which I was now dashed on the rocks, where the vessel at length drifted. On coming to myself and opening my eyes whose face should I meet but that of the Egyptian! ‘Did I not tell you the gulf should be mocked of the prey it yawned for? Not one of your comrades is lost! Your vessel has been dashed on these rocks, but no soul has been sacrificed. Awake! arise! thank the destinies that hover round this child,’ (and the old man’s eye glanced on Renmore’s brow,) “which have been potent enough to shield yourself and your sea-mates. Arise! follow me, and recruit your wasted strength at the spot where I shall lead you.’ At the same time she placed a leathern bottle to my lips from which I drank, and with what little strength I possessed I crawled from the projecting rock where I had been thrown, as I cast one last look on the shattered hulk of the

vessel, whose fore-castle was, as it were, impaled on the projecting peak of a huge rock, or rather wedge of rock, that thrust itself out into the sea. As I followed my guide, I inquired after the fate of my comrades, and learned 'that they had been rescued together with herself from their peril by the timely assistance of some fishermen on the coast; and that I myself, having been flung on the rock from a different point of the wreck, had escaped their notice, but that she had remembered the interest with which I, above my comrades, had sought to know her tale, and had accordingly come to look for me, and offer me relief and recruit.' By the time she had finished making this communication to me, we arrived at the rude gipsy tent raised within the verge of a wood not very far distant from the coast. A loose curtain of faded cloth served for a door, and after having entered she motioned me to a seat on an old chest, while she took her station near a low fire which she fanned with a fir bough, until it began to blaze up with greater strength. She then gave me some food which she prepared, and which I subsequently found was supplied her by some members of a gipsy sisterhood, to whose body she appeared to belong. After my strength was somewhat recruited, I recurred to the subject of our eventful and perilous voyage, its disasters, and our miracu-

lous escape. ‘And this child!’ I exclaimed, ‘this infant,’ for she now appeared again with the child in her arms, (and the eyes of Renmore and old Mike here involuntarily met,) ‘is the guardian spirit to whom thanks are due for our delivery! think you,’ I asked, half alarmed, half incredulous, ‘the same event would not have awaited our perils, and rescued us from them, had that child of fate not been among us?’

“The look of reprobation and surprise, as it were, at my guiltiness, yet more than presumption, with which she regarded me, I shall never forget. . . . ‘Incredulous!’ she replied, after a moment’s pause; ‘if you have not witnessed enough to assure you that certain heads are the care or the scorn of certain destinies, keep watch on the path through life of this fatally-preserved, but not, therefore, happy being!’ and she held up the child as she spoke; while I gazed on it with increased awe and marvel, as I asked ‘what were the fates for which it was marked out, and which she had hitherto so truly foreseen.”

. . . Here the old man paused, while Renmore drew in his breath, as he listened with an interest that absorbed him, and a painful anxiety he could not explain. The rustic group, too, pressed nearer to Mike, and asked with earnestness, “What were they?—what were they?—what did the Egyptian say?”

“No, no!” said the old man shaking his head, with a look of repugnance no less than reluctance and sorrow, as his eye glanced hastily from Renmore to the group. “No, no! why should I utter what may yet,—what I would wish may yet never come to pass?” And before they could proceed to reiterate their request on this point, he hurried on to the conclusion of his tale thus:—

“I followed the path, I kept in view the fortunes of that child from that hour. Its parents, from whom it had been kidnapped, I restored it to, (and here Renmore involuntarily started;) and though its wandering and adventurous spirit, as it grew towards boyhood, led it to abandon those parents and that home,” (and as the old man spoke he now fixed his eye again significantly on Renmore;) “though through the mazes of his fortune he has eluded the search of his nearest and dearest friends and kindred, yet never has he eluded the vigilance of my one keen, constant watch! which has traced him when he thought no eye was upon him,—which has followed him where none would have looked for him,—which has detected him when he has been concealed from all others! I follow him, I watch him, for his good—for his succour! . . . with a hope that the destinies that have yet preserved him have not done so for his ultimate harm. It is the mighty working of fate that I am watching,

and I see ! . . . but away with ye, my friends, I have told you my tale,—ask no more. It were well for my doubts and fears if they recked as little of harm concerning the goings of this child of fate as ye do,—ye who are ignorant of him, and his path of life !” And here for a moment the old man sat silent, with his eyes fixed on some phantom of the brain, that seemed to rise before him and address itself at once to his regret and fear.

“ Well !” he exclaimed, at length awakening from the spell which had bound him, “ the day cannot be far distant when my search will have tracked its object to the end of its flittings ! . . . it evades and bewilders me less and less ! . . . it meets me through the gloom of fate more and more palpably—well !”

And his eye, accompanying his words, wandered from the vision on which it had seemed but now to gaze, till it met Renmore’s, where it fixed itself and remained for a moment or two, looking with a significance where fear and sorrow still mingled, till it was hastily withdrawn, as the old man now made his way hurriedly from the porch. The crowd involuntarily shrunk back with Jock at their head, and made an avenue for his exit ; and as they gazed on him with staring eyes and lips apart, their awe was too great to admit of their any further questioning him.

CHAPTER XIII.

“ ’Twas partly love, and partly fear,
And partly ’twas a bashful art,
That I might rather feel than see
The swelling of her heart.” COLERIDGE.

RENMORE had scarcely aroused himself from the spell in which Mike’s glance, and the dangerous meaning it conveyed, had held him, than he, too, withdrew from the passage where he had but now stood to listen, and retired to his room. The crowd was too busily engaged in its own rude comments on the narration it had just heard to take any notice of him or his movements, and he withdrew as unperceived as he had come. If there were some few amongst the group that, piquing themselves on their superior sagacity to the rest, were inclined to exhibit their scepticism on any stories where destiny is concerned, they formed but a small proportion. The greater number, of which was Jock, were pleased, with more submis-

sive minds, to bring forward various illustrations of the veracity and cogency of such circumstances as they had just heard in many a "strange coincidence," "singular dream," and "unaccountable presentiment," which they related one to the other after their fashion. The children, with the ruder swains, male and female, amongst the group, dwelt with delight on the glittering colours in which Mike had portrayed his adventures, and were unable to satisfy themselves, in sufficiently lauding the marvels it exhibited.

The din of their voices had scarcely died away, than Renmore had sought his pillow for repose, for it was now growing late; but in vain. The figure of the weird mariner haunted him, and his significant look and keen eye still seemed bent on him; while the various circumstances of the story he had heard suggested to his mind the question whether the old man meant to apply them to him? For what other inference than this could he draw from the marked manner in which the narrator had addressed them every now and then to himself? And then he coupled with them the warning that had so startled him on his first meeting with the weird mariner, and which increased the perplexity of his thoughts on the subject. He was determined, at the earliest opportunity, to seek out Mike, (who appeared, at any rate, friendly

towards him,) and obtain from him some clearer insight into his reasons for applying to himself the circumstances of the narration he had delivered. As usual, he endeavoured to quiet the apprehensions that a constant presentiment of ill suggested to his mind by mocking at Mike's story as the chimera of superstition, while a pleasanter solace yet was afforded him in a recurrence to the thought of Gertrude. Since the period when we last were in his company and that of the Beauty, a period now of more than ten days, their interest in each other, together with their acquaintance, had strengthened; and the determination also had now become stronger in his mind of making her those proposals of an alliance which his love for her had suggested, even on a much earlier acquaintance. He might then fly with her to a foreign shore, and mock at circumstance. An additional incitement was offered him to come to this conclusion, by the feeling how precious were the moments which he was passing in her presence; for he never knew how soon he should be forced away from the spot and from her. Constant, it may well be imagined, was the vexation occasioned him by the gratuitous attentions of that well-meaning but mischievous lady, Miss Howbiggen. "By heavens!" he would exclaim impatiently, as he was compelled politely to decline her repeated attempts "at drawing him

out." "By heavens! this good person will not be quiet until she has either forced me into those perils of publicity I am so anxious to avoid, or driven me from the spot altogether!"

This last, however, was a difficult conclusion to arrive at, held to the place as he was by the spells exercised over him by charms such as those that, while he thought of them, recompensed him for every moment of mental suffering—whether edged by remorse, or conscious guilt, or the pang of that dark apprehension of danger that fury-like ceaselessly goaded him. The more he shrank away from the advances made to bring him forth from his "fearful privacy," the more eagerly had he sought the Arcadia, both spiritual and real, to which his passion for the lovely herd-mistress sweetly called him away, as he followed the wild and sunny mazes of her mountain-track. The blossom-crowned brow of banks that fringed the stream,—the mosaic work of chequered mosses, green, yellow, and hoar, with which Nature's hand had pranked the hill-brow,—the shadowy silent glades, where streamed the sun-ray through the wood vista, as if to cheer the dream of the dark labyrinth—the russet dells,—the wild steep, all golden glittering with the yellow broom-flower, or purpled with the heath-blossom,—what were they to him? What were all the beauties of this fair district,

soft or sublime however, unless endeared by the presence of her that would have invested a wilderness even with charm for him? No; it was not in the light of those lovely scenes that his heart sunned it, but in the smile of Gertrude, that reflected his own—that gazed on them with him, in the free and innocent gladness of her guileless spirit—and yet more, in the confidence of that pure as bright affection that repaid his own.

Not more chequered, however, was that wild pathway he tracked with the lovely herd-mistress, with its light and gloom—now winding over the slope—now sinking immersed in the murky shadows of overhanging crags—than the dubious pathway of his existence. Even when gladdened by her companionship, the thoughts of that peril and pain in which he stood would occasionally sweep, like storm-clouds, across his mind, and momentarily hold him contemplating them in gloomy abstraction, while the sweet as simple girl by his side would look on him with a gaze of mute wonder and awe, as the colour waned on her cheek, till it was again lit up by seeing its usual cheerfulness once more animate his countenance, while their eyes met, too, in the smile of mutual confidence.

But, on stole the sleepless hours of the night, when, at the first break of dawn, he rose, and advancing to the casement where the sun-rays

streamed in, he threw open the window, and stood looking out on the ruddy eastern heavens and the fresh matin scene before him. The dewdrops wide glittered, all rosy tinted in the light, like ruby gems some fairy hand had shed, and the odours of herb and flower poured up the grateful steam of their incense; but neither the lustre of the one nor the fragrance of the other yielded joy or balm to him. Nature wide poured her song of love and glee not more in the carol of her feathered wood-choristers than in the strain of joy that seemed to rise from all the gladsome blossoms that crowned her brow, from the murmur of those sparkling brooks, and the rapture of all created things, smiling through that morn of lustre! Forlorn, indeed, must be the heart that has no spark of joy which may shine in glad contagion with all that lustre around,—that has no note of happiness within it to respond to that challenge of harmony and rapture. So felt Renmore, as he now proceeded with his toilette; and by the time he had finished it, the voices of rustics in the adjoining farm-yard, and the shrill, clear cry of chanticleer “oft times renewed,” proclaimed to him that the little world of Buttermere was once more afoot and astir on its happy, no less than homely vocations.

A light step was now seen brushing away the dewdrops of the lawn on which his casement looked.

Her brow was fresh as Aurora's herself; her buskined step as light as that of the huntress goddess's, and the roses that breathed their fragrance beside her way, and those ruby-tinted dewdrops which she skimmed, seemed to Renmore's eye to win fragrance and lustre from her lovely presence. "It is Gertrude," he said, "she is on her way to the homestead. I'll go down and try to quiet this turmoil of spirit in her presence." So, he descended the staircase, while Gertrude had entered the farm-yard from the lawn, through a door in the paling that divided it from the garden at the back of the hostelry. Scarcely had she entered the homestead than the clear, shrill call of her horn brought the kine to the shed, where one of the hinds, whose duty it was to assist her in the charge of the dairy, proceeded to milk them, ere she drove them forth to pasture. As she was engaged in superintending this, her rural duty, she was a little surprised at the presence, at so early an hour of her mother's "distinguished guest;" while as he approached her he observed, smiling,

"Ah! you see, Gertrude, the thought of the 'Beauty of Buttermere' would not let me sleep a wink more for the life of me! So up I rose; and somehow or other, I find myself as usual where you are. As if some magnet had involuntarily

attracted me to wander where I now am—the magnet of your charms, Gertrude! And I confess I could not see you cross the lawn to your dairy here without coming down to wish you good morning, and look at your homestead, which as yet I have not seen.’

“Indeed, Sir, you honour much our humble homestead,” she replied, archly; “and since it was this which you came to see,—for you require too much from my credulity, when you express that a thought of my poor self disturbed your rest,—why, I shall be much honoured in shewing you over it.”

“No, no, I declare—” said Renmore, smiling, as he was about to defend his sincerity, when she arrested his words by directing his attention to the various objects she now pointed out in succession to him, while in the smile that played over her countenance, a modest consciousness of her power over his heart was mingled with the pleasure of obliging. The order and neatness of the stalls and the beauty of the cattle put him in mind of some of the “interiors” he had witnessed in Switzerland and part of Holland; and the neatness, also, economy, and cleanliness of the dairy on which the fair herd-mistress justly piqued herself, was not seen by him without recalling to his mind Homer’s descriptions, (for he was a man of education both in classic and modern lore,) and eliciting

from him the approbation so justly due to Gertrude's management, and which it was no mere compliment to pay her.

Having passed through the inspection of all that part of the homestead that came under the Beauty's immediate superintendence, Renmore now beheld her proceeding to lead her herd forth on the down pastures, and the magnet that had attracted him thus far to her side relinquished none of its power as he followed her trace. "You are blessed, Gertrude," he said, as he paused and looked back on the homestead they had left, and the maze of beauty around; "you are blessed in having a home amidst scenes of such splendour and loveliness. I feel as I look on them that they are the abode of joy and peace, and that I could live in them till my dying day with pleasure, and wish not to pass beyond their happy bound."

"The scenes are well enough," she replied, with a graceful seriousness tempering her usual archness; "but it is the hearts and affections that dwell in them that can alone render them the seat of true or worthy happiness. And where does not, Sir, (to use the words I have heard yourself express to me,) the "taint of circumstance" spread to infect the content you speak of!" And there was a certain significance in her words that he interpreted as applying to her own feelings and situation.

"True, it is true enough that such is too frequently the case," replied Renmore, looking at her with a regard of inquiry as to the reference of her words, while he continued—"but such a taint as you mention has surely never made its influence felt in Gertrude's peaceful home? Unless," he added, "you would say that the repugnance I understand you to feel as regards the addresses of this preacher—this Quandish—occasions you to express yourself as you do?"

"No, no," she said, hesitatingly, "it was not exactly that which suggested the remark at the moment . . . though, indeed, it were of itself sufficient reason to have done so. . . . It was not that:" and the blush stole over her cheek as she turned her face away to conceal the confusion of which it was the involuntary witness.

"Not that? what could it have been, then, that suggested such a remark? How can circumstance ever have tried the spirit or damped the heart of one that has lived so far from the sphere of its wasting influence?"

"No, no!" she replied, suddenly, "indeed I have no cause to complain of my home, of my lot in life . . . but——"

"But what, Gertrude? what obstacle to its flow (but such as I suggested) can the stream of your happiness have encountered? What struggle can that guileless, that pure spirit have ever known?"

Is it possible that a perturbed thought can find place in a bosom whose beating can alone be tuned to peace, whose strain these calm as lovely haunts alone respire? What care-cloud can have passed across the sunny joys of that pure maiden heart?"

Gertrude was silent a moment, when again she replied hastily, as if desirous to turn aside the subject of remark upon which she had involuntarily entered—"None, none! . . . why should you, Sir, imagine so? I merely was speaking generally, merely generally. . . . I . . ."

"I thought so! I thought so!" continued Renmore, willing to relieve her of her evident embarrassment, as he continued, "Your remark just now was just. Every spot, after all, derives its real charm from the power that dwells within us, of reflecting its challenge to happiness. You cannot want this power, unconscious of the trials of life, living in the affections of all, possessed of charms where all hearts must bow—ay," and he added, smiling, as he looked back on the homestead they had left, and the premises attached to it, "and the Beauty of Buttermere has other possessions than her charms to boast of, though not so dazzling."

"Nay!" replied the Beauty, gladly seizing the challenge to resume her usual archness, as she laughed, "Nay! the most dazzling! I have heard Dr. Esdaile say that the charms you now speak of are the greatest of 'female attractions.'"

“Indeed!” replied Renmore, smiling, “I fear Dr. Esdaile is a little too just in his estimate of social sordidness. A complexion of roses and lilies is bewitching doubtless; but doubly so, when ‘gold’ gleams for the ‘roses,’ and ‘silver’ for the ‘lilies.’ But you, Gertrude, combine all these attractions, and are consequently ‘formidable’ indeed! Fortunate will be the suitor that shall win such treasures of person and purse. . . . Out of so many as she must have, my Gertrude’s heart must be not a little puzzled where to make its choice?”

“And consequently relieves itself of the embarrassment by dismissing the thought of all of them!” she replied, laughing; “Ay! one and all!”

“What? is it so difficult, then, to fix the choice—is it so difficult?” he continued, as he took her hand, which she passively gave up to him as he arrested her attention by the increased earnestness and impassioned tenderness that now marked his manner. “Is it so difficult not to understand where the heart whispers its choice would rest! Out of thousands I should know where mine would! And, should I rightly interpret the language of those eyes that seem to ask me, Where? what answer can I make them, but in telling Gertrude I can love none but her—that I can live for none but her—that the hand in which her own is held is given her together with the heart that—”

She was here suddenly recalled to the consciousness of his having taken her hand, which, led away by the tacit interest she felt in what he said, she had involuntarily yielded up to him ; and which she now withdrew, as a sense of the discrepancy of her situation and his own now again recurred to her, in that conflict with the whisperings of her heart to which we have heretofore borne witness.

“ And—hold, Sir !” she replied ; “ think you that a poor humble village girl is not conscious of the great distance that must separate her lot in life from that of one of your station in society,—a circumstance which deprives you of the right of speaking to me thus ?” she continued, while the blush now of virtuous pride mantled on her cheek and exhibited her to Renmore yet more lovely in the light which it shed there to enhance that of beauty.

“ Then it is on the account alone of our discrepancy of station that you forbid me to speak—on this account alone ?” he repeated, anxiously ; and when she hung her head in silence as hesitating what reply she should make, he continued, “ Then I am to bless myself in the dear thought that it is not because you reject my love for you that you forbid me to speak ! it is not that . . .” but here his words were stopped short by a circumstance that, in checking them, damped too the glow of that rapture of heart, and hurried him

from his momentary elysium back to the dark consciousness of his real condition and its perils.

Across the rugged and narrow path, then, which our hero and Gertrude were pursuing, the gnarled trunk of an hoar and aged oak protruded itself, upon the lower part of which something kept flapping backwards and forwards as the wind waved it in passing. It was on that side of the way on which Renmore was, and was not seen by Gertrude, more especially as we have described her head as being drooped as he was uttering the words to her that had just escaped him. As he was speaking, it flapped in his very face, and startled him as he looked up and saw that it was a leaf—not of the tree—but of paper; in fact, a leaf it may be said out of the book of Fate itself, the first ominous letters of which, as they met him, were those of “REWARD.” A thrill of horror shot through his frame, and though he had presence of mind enough instantly to snatch down the placard (for such it was) and convey it unseen to the breast pocket of his dress, yet so startled and confounded had he been at the suddenness of the warning that untowardly met him in the moment of happiness which he fancied he had snatched from fate, that his voice faltered, and his step tottered; while Gertrude, looking up in his face with alarm, betrayed the secret of that return her heart made to

his love, as in her concern for him she exclaimed hastily—

“What is it affects you? are you ill,—dear Sir?
. . . what can I do for . . .”

“Nothing—nothing, my sweet Gertrude!” he replied, rallying as well as he might, and endeavouring to regain his composure. “Merely the effect of the extreme heat. I suppose . . .”

. . . “Yes! yes! you are not well,—the colour wavers on your cheek. Sit down on the bank here one moment.” . . . And ere he could reply, she ran and filled a small horn-cup which she carried with her, from the pure lymph of a little torrent that ran brawling down the steep a few paces further on, chasing its way from the natural basin whence it welled at the hill summit, and winding in a thin spiral and silvery column down the crag side, at last flowed smoothly onward through the hollow below, till at last it formed the boundary, as we remember, of the garden of the Traveller’s Rest.

The period of her absence, brief as it was, afforded Renmore time, however hastily, to glance over the placard, which ran as follows:—

“£100 REWARD.

“Whereas, the notorious impostor and forger, Hatfield, is supposed to be lurking about in disguise in the neighbourhood of Keswick; the above sum will be given to any person or persons who shall deliver him into the hands of justice.”

He hastily crumpled up the paper in his hand, and thrust it again into his breast-pocket as he exclaimed, "Is it so, then? Mike's intelligence when I first met him was too true! and the danger is stealing closer and closer to my haunt. . . . What shall I do? . . . How can I fly from the spot where Gertrude is—where all that makes life worth struggling for, I may well say, exists in her?—especially, too, when I had just wound up successfully this negotiation of the heart with her. And Fenton too! Perhaps these blood-hounds are not quite on my heels yet. . . . Yes, yes; they must be. I must see Mike again, and ask him what he"

But here the lovely girl returned with her tribute of the fresh cool flood, stainless and pure in its translucent crystals as herself.

"Thank you, thank you, my sweetest Gertrude!" he said with an intenseness and sincerity of feeling he had even yet scarcely felt. So sensible was he at this moment in particular, that though a whole world was in array against him for the sacrifice of his life, there was still one being that felt for him, with him,—there was yet one that loved and cherished him! "Thank you, my kind, beloved Gertrude! I am better."

"Oh! I am happy, very happy to see you are well again; but drink this fresh, cool water, it will

recruit you much ; in truth, the heat is great." And as she spoke, he took the cup and drank, if merely to support the impression on her mind that he had suffered from momentary indisposition ; though, in truth it may be said, he was well pleased to take it at her hands as a token of her return of his affection, and success in the suit which he had such cogent reasons for prevailing in. And now they walked on again, and he was about to state to her, in continuation of the words which we have witnessed so disastrously broken off, that—" in all probability, circumstances would oblige him to leave the village, but that he would write to her to join him, in order that they might be united by the bonds of the church ; with many more assurances of his love for her." But all that he would have said was prevented by the appearance of a party of people coming along the Buttermere and Keswick road near which they were, and which rendered it prudent for Renmore to step aside more into the fastnesses of the crag behind. Gertrude, on her part, was not unwilling to be alone, rather than be seen in company with " the gentleman," which circumstance would have awakened the stupid and coarse surmise of the group that now shortly passed her. This turned out to be composed merely of a party of farmers on horseback on their way to the cattle fair at Cockermouth ;

and some of them recognising the lovely herd-mistress, greeted her after their rude fashion as they passed her.

“ Why, bless us, if yonder be not the Beauty of Buttermere !” cried one worthy, with mouth and eyes alike distended.

“ Hah ! Missis Gertrude, and how do ye ?” uttered another ; “ and how does the good dame, Missis Wetherby ?”

“ Pleasant day. Good day to ye, young Missis,” said a third. To all of which greetings she gave her usual kindly reply, as she smiled to witness the oafish stare they each and all bestowed on her charms.

This rustic cavalcade having passed, she continued her way along the hillocks, while Renmore having now descended on the other side the height, pursued a narrow and devious lane that suddenly brought him, by a way he had never been, to the village. He stood at the threshold of it, irresolute whether to advance or retreat again into the wilderness of the rocks. . . . “ Perhaps I shall see Mike,” he said to himself, “ if I proceed,—I will go cautiously. If any circumstances of danger meet me, why then it is time to retreat. I will venture onwards, for I am not prepared to quit Gertrude ere yet I have imparted to her all I would say.” . . . Thus reasoning with himself, he

proceeded, cautiously looking round him, until now he had advanced by a side approach to the projecting window of the public room of the Traveller's Rest. He looked warily in—when back his step shrunk as if a serpent had been suddenly detected in his path, and but just in time to avoid his stepping on it and arousing its hostility. In a word, it was fortunate for him he had exercised caution in his advance ; for but a glance at the person he had perceived (unseen himself happily) assured him that the hand that had fixed the placard on the oak trunk, and which he had torn from it, was not far off. The face that met him was but seen in profile, as the person to whom it belonged sate with his back nearly turned from the window ; but a glance of that profile was sufficient for the quick eye of Renmore to enable him to recognise his deadliest foe and persecutor. Away he shrank from the window, and retraced his steps with what speed he might to the same lone and rugged pathway by which he had entered the village. He pursued its windings through a chasm in the crag, and which led him in a different direction to that by which he had come.

CHAPTER XIV.

“ Where, save the rugged road, we find
No appanage of human kind ;
No hint of man, if stone or rock
Seem not his handywork to mock
By something cognizably shap'd ;
Mockery, or model roughly hewn,
And left as if by earthquake strewn.”

WORDSWORTH.

RENMORE wandered on, until he arrived at a dreary, desolate spot beneath the naked height of a cliff whose sides were full of dark cavities, occasioned by the falling away of masses of earth. Large, uncouth slabs of rock lay strewn about, their barren brows tufted with wild weeds and briars that waved in the wind. This wilderness of rock seemed like the waste of an ancient amphitheatre in ruins. It was a savage and forbidding spot, and, like his fortune too, awakening only sensations of dearth and peril ; and while yet he was occupied with the gloomy associations it

awakened,—and how he was driven to shun the wolf “man” in wilds barren and forbidding as that before him,—he was startled at suddenly witnessing emerge from the rock-side, or rather grow out of the rock, a gaunt and pallid form, as if itself, too, of stone. It was a very denizen of the wilderness, and a birth of stone! It stood weird and lonely amidst the savage arena of broken masses of rock, and motioned Renmore to follow it, as it advanced to a rude door opening into one of those cavities or recesses in the cliff-side already mentioned. Our hero, though not much given to superstition, could scarcely at the moment, and in the turbid state in which his mind was, believe that what he saw was not an apparition. He stood motionless and examined it. It waved its hand, and beckoned to him to follow it into the aperture, or cavern-mouth. The dimness of the light did not permit him to scan the features of the figure, which looked yet more gaunt and vast, just as objects appear enlarged through twilight. Unwilling to give way to any suggestions of alarm, warranted by the consideration that this figure might be that of some enemy who was about to entrap him,—he followed the movements of the phantom rather than man, till he saw it enter through those murky jaws of the aperture. He passed that dim threshold of rock; and there, by the light of a small, iron-

mounted lamp, he beheld standing on the opposite side of a table, constituted of one solid slab of stone, the somewhat "questionable shape" of the ancient mariner; for such the "phantom-denizen" of this wilderness turned out to be.

"And you have lingered thus long about the precincts of this spot after the warning I whispered in your ear on my first meeting you on the summit of that very cliff that towers above us," (for it was there Renmore had met the geologist and old Mike.) "I do not often speak my warnings thus in vain!" And the countenance of the aged seer, for such he seemed to be, wore a mixed look of reproof and sorrow as he spoke.

"No, indeed!" replied Renmore; "your warning, so far from being lost on me, has excited my constant and painful vigilance. I indeed have this day learned how true it was!"

"And do you hesitate to fly from this dangerous spot? Do you yet sport on the brink of fate?"

"I should long ago have doubtless listened to your warning, but that circumstances, feelings, affections perhaps, which I could not altogether control, have held me back. But I have been taught this day that any longer delay is dangerous—may be fatal—and yet I am scarcely prepared to quit this spot so abruptly; there is one I would

have wished yet to have seen, and spoken but a word to, ere I hastened away."

"And think you I knew not the spell that has had, and still has, power to combat my warnings for your safety? Think you the searching eye of old Mike has not seen you when you least thought he was watching your movements, loitering away the moments in the sunshine of that fatal beauty that charms you to your doom?"

"What! Gertrude betray me?" hastily interposed Renmore.

"No, no! I meant not that. She is of too noble, too pure, too generous a spirit to harbour a thought of perfidy or meanness. It is you who would betray yourself. As for Gertrude, she loves you too well!"

"Then any danger, any doom, were lightened of its suffering if I thought that Gertrude would feel for me. But how know you that she loves me?"

"Have I not seen her on the hill with her herd, when you were not as usual by her side, cast many a wistful glance to the spot where you were wont to approach? And this is the girl whose destinies you are about to involve in the terror of your own!" And his accents trembled as he spoke, in a mingled tone of ruthfulness and regret.

“Old man, speak less in these dark and fearful riddles! I understand you not! I would lay down my life for Gertrude!—and the good-will you shew towards me were unworthily entertained in my behalf, if I were capable of doing aught to endanger so much loveliness and innocence!”

“It were in vain to explain myself further to you, since I well perceive you cannot relinquish her. . . . I cannot alter either the tendency of your destinies or your love for her. . . .”

“My destinies! I understand you! Can I do otherwise than suppose, after that dreary warning you gave me on my first meeting you, that you signified any other than my own fates in those of that child which your late narrative portrayed so fearfully?”

“If that narrative bears a true reference to yourself,” replied the old mariner, solemnly, “would you not be involving her in your own peril?”

“*If* it be true!” exclaimed Renmore. “Forgive me, Mike, if I speak somewhat impatiently. I am sensible of the concern, the goodwill you express, and have manifested towards me; but am I to place implicit credence in a tale which the world would but account as the birth of so much vain and fond superstition?”

“You say”—replied the old man, calmly, and more in sorrow than in anger at what he considered

the "infatuation" of his companion—" You say that you have this day had reason to find my warning true; and, yet, the blindness of your attachment, while it would willingly lead you to hope for safety, if only for the sake of Gertrude, still suggests to you that my fears for your doom may be all unfounded and visionary. . . . And so, it seems," he continued, after a pause, "you have at length encountered your enemy? You have seen Quandish? You have seen the preacher?"

" Seen Quandish!—seen the preacher!" exclaimed Renmore, in surprise. No, I have not seen him,—I have never, indeed, seen him! Would that it had been the preacher and no other that I saw! In a word, it was my deadliest foe I came in sight of; but I shrank back speedily and unseen by him; and in my retreat from the village I thus found my way at length hither."

Old Mike looked at him with a smile of incredulity, as he shook his head and replied—" Did I not tell you, in my first timely warning to you, to beware of the seeming harmless guise under which religion might cloak the worst of guile and malice? Your bitterest foe, the being you saw and shrank from this day, was the preacher—was Quandish, and no other!"

" Impossible! or dwelling here at the spot, as he does, I surely must have seen him ere this."

“He has been absent from the first day you were here until now, searching for you as near as Keswick, where he deemed you to be : but if you doubt it, follow me, and I will afford you an opportunity of ascertaining the truth without endangering yourself.”

So saying, the old mariner suddenly rose from his seat, and extinguishing the flickering wan ray of the lamp, as he had now reached the threshold of the cavern, he strode forth, phantom-like, once more upon the rock-strewn wilderness, followed by our hero, in the direction ultimately of the village, with mingled feelings of curiosity and apprehension.

CHAPTER XV.

“ I mine eyes will rivet to his face,
And after, we will both our judgments join
In censure of his seeming.”

SHAKSPEARE.

THE way was long and devious which the old mariner took, and the scene was now clad in the twilight-grey mantle of evening. As they proceeded, the conversation, on the part of Renmore, naturally recurred to the particulars of Mike's narrative, and which led to certain disclosures as to the parentage of our hero, which the circumstances of our story do not as yet permit us to unfold. Suffice it to say, he had fully elicited from Mike that his surmise was not unfounded; that the tale of his own destinies was recorded in those of the child of the narrative and its “ charmed life.”

The approach to the village, to which they now came, was (in the present direction) through a small wood, or copse, of Scotch firs, which

belted the slope of the descent by which Mike and our hero pursued their ominous way. Having passed through this belt of firs, they found themselves on a fair and verdant glade, skirted on either side by avenues of lime, Scotch fir, horse-chesnut, and yew trees. At the end of the glade their ears were saluted by the sound of a deep sonorous voice, as of one holding forth to a multitude; and on their now turning round the corner of the glade, by which access was afforded at this end of it to the village, they came to a square brick building with folding doors, whence they perceived the sound proceeded. They both stopped for a moment to listen more attentively to the purport of the words uttered, and were at little loss to discover that they were those of a dissenting preacher; while the ill-looking square pile of brick was the temple of which he was *pontifex maximus*.

Renmore had scarcely listened a moment to the voice before he started and expressed to Mike, in an earnest yet under-tone, "I could wager money to any amount that I know that voice! . . . True! it was the voice I heard shortly after my first arrival with Dr. Esdaile at the Traveller's Rest. They told me it was the preacher's."

"Whether it were the preacher's or any one's else, it was plain, no doubt, you knew it then; and so you seem to know it now. If you knew the

voice, what say you to looking in at the door, and seeing if you know the face? You may do it unperceived by crouching behind me."

So saying, Mike entered the folding doors, which unfortunately flapped back with a loud slam as he passed them, intending to hold them open with his hands, so as to admit his companion without any noise. The congregation being all intent on the oracle before them, would have budged not an inch nor turned round a brow or bonnet to see who entered, had it not been for this untoward accident of the slamming of the folds, occasioned by their slipping from Mike's hand. In doing this, the attention of the throng was called to the door, and not only to this circumstance, but to the unusual appearance in such a place of the weird mariner. All heads were now involuntarily turned round to the man of "marvel and of mystery," while the more godly of the audience felt certain qualms of disquietude, very similar to such as might be expected to arise at the appearance of an evil spirit on the holy ground which it profaned; for scarcely other than this was Mike accounted by the more superstitious in the place, of which body the congregation now met together was more particularly made up. Mike did not at all admire the accident which had provoked attention where he had so much desired to avoid it, and turned hastily round, as he

whispered to his companion not to delay, but follow him out of the chapel immediately.

His words were heard, indeed, by Renmore, but with an utter inability for the moment to move from the spot. A singular spectacle presented itself to the audience;—the eyes of the preacher and Renmore were fixed mutually on one another in earnest gaze, while the words of the former had been stopped short, as it were by some sudden and unaccountable cause, and hung suspended on his tongue as he stood spell-bound and fixed in his scrutiny of this new and unexpected visitant of the dissenting temple. Renmore was the first to recover from the surprise by which he had been overpowered, and ere the preacher could also recover himself and find the use of speech again, Renmore had vanished, and was now following in the wake of old Mike.

The first words he uttered to his companion were in a quick and anxious voice, “You have indeed spoken truly. But who should have imagined that the man I dreaded should have taken this guise, or disguise rather, of a dissenting preacher? I need not say he is one and the same with the person I saw to-day. I have seen my bitterest enemy in this preacher; and what is worse, was seen too plainly by him!”

“Ay! it was a small accident, but likely to do a

great mischief, that slamming of the doors just at the moment when the hand of fate should have held them still as the gates of death when once closed on the comer that enters them ! . . . It was to be !—it was to be, I suppose !” said the old man as he strode forward, now trying to keep pace in turn with Renmore, who before had followed the track of Mike from his stone cell “*haud passibus æquis.*”

“What ? you have seen now enough to convince you,” said the old man, “that Mike was not mistaken ! · I suspected, nay, I was certain, that this was the man from whom the hand-bills, promising the ‘Reward’ I mentioned to you on our first meeting, were distributed at Keswick. He thought, doubtless, the object of his search was there.”

“So I was before I came to this spot,” replied Renmore, anxiously ; “and here I have seen no one till this day who could excite my alarm.”

“And he till this moment has seen no one who has given him so much foul joy to behold as yourself ! Did I not tell you, I say again, when we first met,—did I not tell you to beware an enemy under this guise of religion ? A fugitive from justice no less than yourself, he has in this feigned character taken up his quarters at this spot, and silently viewed all things, while himself has escaped the molestation of the world under the privilege of the

sanctimonious calling he has adopted. I suspected all this of him, knowing his character as I did, since I remarked the 'Reward' that appeared at Keswick always followed this man's track ! For so it was, too, at the spot he passed through previously to reaching Keswick !—A 'reward placard' was put up there also by him."

"Ay, ay ; no doubt he has followed my track, and has now come up with me in the very quarter where he least expected to find me, for I had left a false direction as to my movements at the place where I stopped at Keswick. This precaution, doubtless, on my part, led him, so fortunately for me, to return to Keswick to hunt for me all this while ;—meantime I had proceeded hither under a new alias or title."

"And, in truth, so well disguised, I should scarcely have known you again, though it was not long since I conveyed you in my boat from Ravenglass."

"But this Quandish," interposed Renmore, "as he calls himself, has need of disguise no less than myself, only he adds the infamy of betrayal—of treachery—to that of crime. The cloak of religion is indeed a strong and safe one under which to impose on the world ! . . . Singular that while he was in pursuit of me, and my forerunner too, in originally settling himself at this spot, chance

should have directed us both in looking for a retreat to one and the same goal !”

“ It was to be ! it was to be !” muttered Mike ; while Renmore continued—“ Nor has this ‘ fiend who has taken the friar’s cowl,’ as the old ballad has it, remained on this spot solely with a view to eluding justice,—or saving himself by betraying me,—but he has cast his ‘ evil eye’ on that creature of light and beauty, Gertrude,—to think of that ! . . .”

. . . “ Ay ; encouraged, too, by her mother, whose weakness he has thus taken advantage of to induce her to aid his suit. Alas ! alas ! if the thirst for lucre at present urges him thus hotly to yield you up and claim the reward held forth to the paltry accomplice and betrayer, as the ‘ price of blood,’ what think you he will not attempt in order to make a sacrifice of your life, when he learns how dangerous a rival he possesses in you as regards his suit with Gertrude ?”

“ True, true ! I expect little quarter ;—though, were I out of the way,—had I never seen Gertrude, or possessed (as I trust I do) her affections,—of all men she would be disinclined to listen to him ! At any rate, this reflection will be some consolation to me,” cried Renmore, with the true feelings of a lover, in which all thoughts, for the moment, of the danger that beset him were lost.

To the sense of this, however, he was speedily recalled by Mike, who exclaimed—

“And now you have been rendered certain as to the dangerous presence of your enemy, whither are you about to fly?—for to loiter any longer here were madness!”

“One moment,” replied Renmore,—“one moment only, to take leave of Gertrude!”

“Nay, one moment may be too long—may render the leave you would take of Gertrude longer than it were pleasant to look forward to! Anything that you would say to her, commit to me. She passes with her herd by my cell often and often. Her cause shall be dear to me as your own.”

“It is my own!” exclaimed the lover, passionately. “Forgive me, Mike,” he continued, “for this rash delay; but were I even in the very jaws of death, I could not pass that threshold,”—and he looked as he spoke towards the Traveller’s Rest, opposite which they had now arrived,—“without telling her once more how I love her. . . . I mean to say it would be imprudent to hurry from the spot thus hastily, without making any excuse as to the suddenness of my movements. Go on, my good Mike; I will follow you by-and-by to your cell.”

But all he might say could effect little in con-

vincing Mike, who muttered to himself, "Blindly thus argues, in the face of his own safety, the man whom destiny marks for its victim! The very means of escape offered him are rejected!—the very step he thinks harmless or secure is the fatal one by which he passes to destruction! . . . Well, well."

So saying, old Mike loitered for a short time outside the porch of the *hostelrie*, as if looking about him, to see if any persons were approaching the spot, when he wandered on, communing with himself, till his form was at length lost in the evening shadows.

Renmore, meantime, had entered the *hostelrie*; when, who should present himself to his view but honest Jock again, the carrier's man, who, perpetually passing and repassing as he was, "looked in" at the Traveller's Rest as often as he found he had anything to spend at its bar. To observe him, a person would have imagined at present that at least he was undergoing a labour equal to that of carrying a couple of heavy portmanteaus; but no such thing. The subject of his perplexity was of a very different nature, though apparently one quite as embarrassing to poor Jock! In a word, he was employed in reading aloud to himself, with staring eyes and mouth wide open, a paper which, being headed with the ominous words, "One hun-

dred guineas reward," will readily be recognised as another placard, placed where it was by the hand of Quandish, on the occasion of his being witnessed by our hero, at an earlier part of the day, sitting in the window-seat of the public room. How speedily Renmore had withdrawn his step will be remembered; while the pseudo-preacher being then again at the hostelry, in order to make inquiries of its landlady relative to her distinguished guest, was doomed once more to disappointment, since that worthy dame had gone to spend the day with some friendly gossips in a neighbouring village, and was not even yet returned. Accordingly, Quandish had contented himself with putting up the placard in the entrance passage, not far from the door; after which he retreated to his abode near the dissenting chapel at the other end of the village.

But to return to Jock. Now, our Touchstone not being too much of a "scholar," read the paper with surprising deliberateness of enunciation, as if he had been spelling the words; thus—"One—hun—dred—One hundred—ahem—Gui—ne—neas re—ward" And here he made a pause, while his eye glancing over the rest, he exclaimed, "Whoy, now! if this ben't the very paper I've seen these dozen times in Keswick!"

"So it is!" said a person, in a tone of indiffer-

ence, as he came up and pretended to inspect it. "Pish! suppose we light our pipes with it, eh, Jock? what say you, my friend?" And here the clown, on turning round, recognised his former benefactor and employer, "the Colonel," who bade him forthwith go and order himself a pot and pipe, while, with his usual liberality, he crossed his hard hand with a sixpence to drink his health.

"And that I will," replied Jock, "and thank your honour;" and accordingly, with sundry accomplished country scrapes of the leg, and "awkwardly grateful" salams with the hand, Jock lost no time in adjourning to that Castalia of rustic inspiration—the tap-room. Renmore, in spite of that coolness in action which characterized him so eminently, as we shall by-and-by more fully witness, naturally enough felt, nevertheless, certain apprehensions lest the "hue and cry" should have been raised after himself within the precincts of the hostelrie at the period when he had witnessed Quandish there that day. Ardent as was his desire to see Gertrude, his step yet hesitated, as he proceeded to seek her, as the thought arose that, in case any such alarm as he apprehended had been given, he at present might be a stigmatized and denounced person, and an object of her reproach, and avoidance too, as well as of others. He stood irresolute for a brief period: at one moment he

wished he had followed Mike's advice and fled ; at another he was determined to know the worst ; which worst was, to him, whether any suspicion, as regarded himself, had reached the ears of Gertrude. Who was to inform him ? Should he seek out one of the domestics ? (for Mrs. Wetherby herself had fortunately been away all day, as already stated) or Gertrude.

“ No ! ” he said to himself ; “ if I made inquiries of either the domestics or the landlady, had she been at home, I should be courting suspicion, supposing nothing yet has been said against me. And though Gertrude would be unwilling to suspect me, of all persons, of being the notorious Hatfield, yet I should rather defer a rencontre with her, until I am more satisfied that I can approach her with a confidence of her being free from all suspicion of the man who is devoted to her, and to whose attachment she responds.” . . . So saying, he turned back from the door of her sitting-room, which was a little lower down on the opposite side of the passage to that on which her mother's “ sanctum ” was, and was proceeding out at the porch, when Gertrude herself issued from her room, attired, as we have at an earlier stage of our story represented her, in her eventide gear. She had heard the hand of some one on the lock of the door ; there was no escaping an interview.

“Is it you, Sir?” she said, as her countenance beamed with modest pleasure at seeing him thus unexpectedly. “Did you require anything? were you looking for——”

“For you! for you! my lovely Gertrude!” exclaimed Renmore, with all a lover’s impatience and joy. Her manner and the tone of her inquiry had completely restored him to confidence, as he felt that she at any rate had yet received no intelligence that might occasion her to regard him with an altered eye. Meantime he thought he would venture a little further in quieting his apprehensions, lest she should have seen the placard lately in the passage.

“You have seen no paper, have you, Gertrude, lying about?” and here he pretended to be looking about, as if in search, as he held the candle over the floor.

“Did you drop it here?” she replied, unconsciously, as she also joined in the search.

“Yes; somewhere in the passage here;” and he continued, as though searching.

“No; I have seen no paper at all; but I will inquire of the servants——”

“Oh no, oh no, love!” replied Renmore, interposing; “it is here, I declare; it was a bank-note! I was almost sure I had dropped it in coming into the passage.” And here he pretended

to pick up the desired note, while he thanked Gertrude for her assistance. And he now withdrew down the passage towards the entrance at its back into the garden, followed by Gertrude. The moments were precious; ere many more winged past, the house, he considered, might possibly be surrounded with persons to apprehend him. "I must, for her sake no less than my own, delay no longer; if I preserve myself, it is as much for her as on account of my own wretched existence. I must make some excuse or another to her." . . . These thoughts passed rapidly through his brain, while he now continued aloud, and in a hurried tone, as he clasped her hand in his own, "Gertrude, love! Gertrude! I am glad to snatch a word with you, for it is possible I may be hurried away from you this very evening."

"What! are you going to leave us?—and so hastily!" interposed the lovely girl, while the waning colour on her cheek bespoke how little acceptable the intelligence of Renmore's departure was to her.

"The illness of a friend, my sweet, (such was the excuse that suggested itself,) may possibly render my immediate departure necessary. I am all anxiety to proceed to the village post-office—to lose no time in opening any letter that may arrive, and I can suffer no one to go but myself. . . .

The post surely ought to have come in ere this—though it is often late. Possibly, however, there may be no letter; or if one should arrive, it may bring better tidings than I expect. Do not doubt, sweet,” he continued, as he wiped away the tear that gathered in her eye; “do not doubt, if I am called away, but that I will return as speedily as possible, but I hope there may be no occasion——”

But ere he could clasp her a second time wildly to his heart, and press his lips to her own, the sound of voices, proceeding from persons entering the porchway, warned him to delay no longer, as he now turned forth upon the lawn. He had quickly crossed it, together with the bridge of the little brook already described as forming its boundary, when now he found himself at the western extremity of that very avenue of Scotch firs, limes, and yews, which he had entered from another quarter with Mike not very long ago. He speedily arrived at the turning that led into the belt of Scotch firs that fringed the cliff in whose lone and dreary recesses the cell of the ancient mariner was situate. For a moment he paused, irresolute as to which turning to take,—the one which, we may remember, led towards the dissenting chapel—or the upward one that conducted to the haunt of Mike.

“To-morrow !” he exclaimed to himself, “it may

be too late to see Gertrude. Not see her again ! Is it an infatuation that whispers to me that the sentence of death itself could not be worse?—that I could not suffer more pain at the thought of surrendering myself to death itself than forego the hope of seeing her again?” . . . And here he paused a moment, and then stamping with his foot upon the ground as though his resolve had been taken, he said, hastily, “There is but one way by which to extricate myself. It is to grapple with the danger rather than shun it. Misfortune and peril grow stronger as we succumb before them. Endurance and defiance can make the severest evils comparatively light!” . . . So saying, he proceeded, with hasty and impatient steps, making his way through the shadows of the trees, growing, as they were, yet darker and darker in the deepening hues of evening.

CHAPTER XVI.

“’Tis a sure key with which thou may’st unlock
The inmost secrets of the hearts of men.”

SHAKESPEARE.

To return now to the dissenting chapel. Vehement had been the “movements” of the spirit in the bosom of the preacher, after having set eyes on Renmore—on the very person of whom he was in quest,—to finish his exhortation, and instantly set forth on the “good work” of his arrest. Had it not been from the fear of recrimination, he would at once have “raised his voice” from the pulpit height, denounced the felon, and had him arrested on the spot. But policy set a padlock on his tongue, and whispered to him that an accomplice who was looking about him to profit by the betrayal of another, would only attain his own exposure by too eager a zeal in this endeavour. No. It was inconvenient just at present that those who contri-

buted towards the stipend he elicited for his preaching accomplishments should know how far maculate he himself was ; not only as originally a participator in crime, but branded, further, with a yet baser imputation—namely, that of being a betrayer of others. The same sage reasons, also, as regarded the “good-will” of dame Wetherby, and the subtle game he was playing with respect to her daughter, rendered it the height of impolicy to pursue any measures that might be accompanied with exposure to himself. His object was to lead his victim, if possible, to the pit that was dug for him, where others might then secure him, and the ungracious task of betrayal be, apparently at least, removed from himself. His agency, in fact, was to be the “cat’s-paw,” to draw the victim into the meshes, where he could only escape with the forfeit of life.

The extreme seclusion that Renmore had observed since his sojourn at the Traveller’s Rest had preserved him totally unknown by sight to any of the people of the village, except Jock. He was therefore recognised by none of the preacher’s auditory, on the occasion of his entry with old Mike ; and as for Mrs. Wetherby, the only one who could have known him, had she been there, it has been already explained that she was absent from the village that day. If this circumstance was fortunate for Renmore, it was a subject of no

small disappointment to Quandish ; the more so, as he had on the preceding day been interrupted by the untoward arrival of old Mike, in the scrutiny he was cautiously proceeding to institute relative to the object of his suspicions. He had intended on the last occasion of his calling (supposing on inquiry his suspicions had been confirmed) to have at once caused her “distinguished guest to be attached” by the satellites of justice, who were but a few miles off, at Keswick.

Baffled, however, once more in his expectation, and seeing no person of whom he considered it worth while to make inquiries on the spot, he slunk away, having left the “hand-bill” already mentioned on the wall of the entrance-passageway, where, however, no person, fortunately for our hero, (as already witnessed,) had seen it until honest Jock, the Buttermere carrier. How it was disposed of we have seen ; and now to return again to the chapel and its preacher. Great, we said, were the “movements” of the spirit in his bosom to make an end of his exhortation, and proceed on the work he had most at heart. If the eyes of his auditory had been a short time past drawn, in surprise, to the interruption that took place at the door, on the unusual appearance of Mike and his companion, the circumstance was now forgotten, in the unusual rapidity of utterance, restlessness of

manner, and haste of delivery in the preacher. At length, having dismissed his flock, he sallied forth, doubting with himself whether he should proceed back to Keswick at once, and fetch with him the satellites of justice, (whom he himself had originally led to that spot;) or whether he should betake him first to the Traveller's Rest, and try and gain a view of the person calling himself Renmore, whom he conceived to be one and the same with the individual he saw within the chapel doors. The latter was the more cautious plan, for he was not yet certain of the identity of Renmore with that of the person he required. Meantime, the delay was dangerous. Yet he did not wish to run the chance of summoning the officers of justice upon a futile errand, or to find another person than the real object of their search. Whilst thus debating with himself, as he paced with steps uncertain as his mind, now slow and irresolute, now hurrying forward, what was his surprise at being accosted by the very being on whose account all this "delicate perplexity" had been occasioned!

If our hero has been witnessed tortured with mental anxiety as to the event of those fearful circumstances by which he was hampered,—if his alarm has been witnessed as justly excited in his efforts to avoid apprehension and its accompanying doom,—yet the anxiety, the dread, attaching to

conscious guilt which haunted his solitary hour, all seemed forgotten, all vanished when he was brought in actual contact with others, though even his worst foes. No trace of alarm or anxiety in his countenance betrayed now to Quandish, any more than it has been heretofore witnessed doing so to Esdaile, the secret of his bosom; the hurry, the torture of thought that lurked within, was all calmed to the outward eye. To look on that smooth brow—that placid courtesy—that gentle cheerfulness—that graceful ease of address—that frank demeanour—that happy dignity of bearing, little would the beholder, who was bewitched with his manner, imagine that these attributes were but the too successful mask under which the criminal denounced by the interdict of justice was concealed. Little would he dream that an address of such frankness and marked gentility was but the decoy to lead him away from suspicion of that guile that was possibly secretly watching its opportunity to entrap him. “Such courtesy and cheerfulness—it cannot be compatible with any base design!” he would exclaim. Alas! the answer must be, that man is a “riddle,” which not even himself can, in all instances, fathom or explain. Yet that such seeming incongruity of moral qualities and attributes characterized this prince of impostors,—this “Chorægus” of the band of all such actors as understand

that art is "*celare artem*,"—was no less certain than surprising. The riddle at first sight seems complicated. A moment's thought, however, will solve it. And why? because there really exists no incongruity, no riddle at all. The being was in himself, after all, but an exerciser of *native* cunning! Fraud was the principle of his motives. From a certain superiority of genius, or mental endowment, or nicer sensibilities, fraud in Hatfield wore a fairer front and a more engaging aspect; but still the real man was made up merely of cunning. All the fairer portion of his attributes were but the tinsel to hide the dross which it too often made to pass current for the genuine ore of honour, frankness, distinction, and all that seemed estimable, engaging, and praiseworthy, in either social or individual attributes. There is no incongruity, then, of moral materials in the singular character before us. His life was a piece of acting. All the fair, the specious, and engaging, it was the business of his art, his cunning, to "act" and exhibit to the dazzled and pleased eye of the beholder. Habit had made the exercise of a good bearing and frank demeanour almost a second nature. As honesty is the best policy, and as Chartres desired to have a "good name," the better to rob under its safeguard, so Hatfield assumed all that was best in his character, as one essential aid to promoting the

better his designs, which were, generally speaking, to live on the credulity of people, and secretly laugh in their faces, while he extorted praise from them. They were unconsciously deluded, deceived, and delighted at once in his society. No, reader; there is no incongruity. Fraud was his one, his only real attribute; for this alone was his nature. And yet shall we utterly condemn him, and say at best he was but a pleasing, a seductive villain? Not so; if there was a redeeming trait in his character, let it, in justice, be vindicated. Yes, let it be exalted, as its due, in his well-known devotion for one who was all that is charming in spirit as in her person. He was generous, too, and brave as far as incurring hazards and responsibilities in the dangerous career in which he had proceeded, while others shrank back with dismay at the daring character of his projects. They would shrink back and avoid his perilous company. Ay, even hardened villains and accomplished swindlers would shrink back afraid to venture as he did. They would "admire" the address with which he carried his attempts into the highest circles, and would look abroad from their fearful lurking places to see their late comrade rewarded for his enterprise by the most flattering social triumphs. They saw him, with surprise and envy, courted by the great, who, for the time, little suspected the "splendid cheat"

that was being played off upon them ! Such as this was his triumph of artful villany in passing himself off as a Mannors at the court of the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland,—such as this was his happy manœuvre when in London, for the brightest season of his existence ! He drove his curricule about town,—mixed with the gayest of the gay, in the radiant circles of wealth, of rank, and fashion's votaries ! The credit he commanded by the plausibility of his address is matter of astonishment ; nor is the credulity of those who took his happily made representations for truth so much to be blamed as the mastery of his art in deception is to be admired ! If dissimulation* means to veil the thing that *is*, and simulation the thing that is *not*, in both these phases of worldly acting he shone pre-eminent. He seemed, as regards the first, everything that was commanding, gentleman-like, and apparently worthy of confidence. Who could doubt or mistrust him, whether he gave his address as the Honourable Mr. Mannors, or the Honourable Colonel Renmore, or any other alias out of the Protean progeny that his assurance and dexterity had called into being to answer the purpose of the time ? No one ! As to the second feature, of simulating,—in other words, pretending

* Quod non est simulo : dissimuloque quod est.

to be that which he was not,—we have said enough of his supremacy as an actor in all worldliness to render not a word more necessary. Such, then, is a fair and faithful portrait of this singular, this engaging (for so he was) individual. We have given it candidly; and have shewn that it was redeemed by the nobler and more exalted features of fearless enterprise in his calling, of high spirit, that weighed not any chances of danger where the genius of the adventurer saw there was any field for his efforts. He went forward to his feats of splendid cunning with cheerful confidence, already sufficiently rewarded in the feeling that none had the same genius, nor, consequently, the same confidence in themselves, to attempt that which appeared a delight to him from the arduous character itself of its accomplishment. When once finally detected, and held up to public condemnation, his “whereabout” beset, and his footsteps tracked by the blood-hounds of justice,—that fearful predicament in which he first presented himself to us,—well may his confidence, so alive at more favourable opportunities,—well, we repeat, may it have been shaken! And what was it that the circumstances through which we have followed him have exhibited as in any degree restoring that confidence to him? His deep esteem and love for that object of beauty whose memory yet throws a lustre round his name for loving

her, and whose return of his affection now alone rendered life desirable to him. Some have gone so far as to say that the engaging character of his dissimulation did in itself redeem somewhat his real iniquity and tortuousness of purpose. As in the instance of Alcibiades, they would forgive the last in their admiration of the genius with which it was supported. We, however, are unwilling either to be led away ourselves or lead others away so much as to seek to render him interesting or redeem his crime "by any such plea." We will waive that claim in his behalf, as a mere stage trick,—false as it is, though "seeming fair,"—and plead for him a nobler claim to interest,—namely, his devotion to the best, as we shall hereafter be more fully called on to attest, no less than loveliest of her sex. We will plead for him the noblest passion that can exalt man or extenuate crime. Yes; every passage in his existence as we now trace it is a tribute to her whose name sheds light over his memory! To love her was in itself a virtue, whose ray is the only light we would willingly hold up to lure the reader's eye away from the shadows that darkle around his name!

The preacher, at the unexpected appearance of the man he sought thus voluntarily presenting himself, started back dumb-founded, scarcely knowing what to say, and conscience-stricken and

confounded at his own baseness of purpose as regarded him. Ay! the meanness of the betrayer shrank back—the sordid informer dwindled into nothingness before the frank, the open, the cheerfully courteous demeanour with which he was now accosted. The man by whom he was greeted inwardly loathed and despised him as both treacherous and brutal, while he addressed him with all apparent gladness as of a friend, happily met and joyfully welcomed. There was an easy air of superiority in Renmore, which involuntarily asserted itself in the colloquy that took place. With whomsoever he conversed, he made himself looked up to. The higher tone in which he spoke, and the air of command which his manner bore, seemed natural attributes that shewed themselves as spontaneously as they did gracefully, and challenged respect as their due. How the native harshness and vulgar insensibility of the person he now addressed shrank back then in conscious insignificance before one whom, by instinct, they owned was a superior! If anything supported the low mind and sordid feelings of the pseudo-preacher in this parley with the prince of Scapins, it was a brutal doggedness that hugged itself up in its own callousness and insensate obduracy.

As they came suddenly on each other, just beneath the lamp that cast its ray over the door-way

of the dissenting chapel, Renmore, with well-affected surprise, exclaimed—

“ Ah ! Simmonds ! Simmonds ! my old and well-tried friend, I . . .”

“ Hush ! hush ! or we shall be overheard,” interposed the preacher in a half whisper, half growl, as he turned away from the lamp and proceeded round the corner of the chapel along the avenue of yews where we have already met him.

“ Overheard ! and what worthier topic could any one overhear than the pleasurable welcome of two old friends ?” And so saying, Renmore held out his hand affably, which was shaken with an awkwardness by his companion, indicative at once of unwillingness to admit a friendly greeting from one whose betrayal he was meditating, and dissatisfaction with himself for permitting himself to be so mastered.

“ No, no,” he replied, doggedly, and jerking back his hand with an ungainliness worthy a bear who has touched a hot iron. “ No, no ; there is no harm in two men welcoming each other ; but then, I’m not known here by the name you remember me by.” It is needless to say that his lately assumed tone of cant was for the present laid aside.

“ Well, then, by any name you please to suggest I shall be happy to welcome you,” rejoined

Renmore with a well-feigned ignorance, and tone of good-humoured inquiry.

“ Oh! they know me here by the name of Quandish,” said the man churlishly, and half dropping his voice.

“ And an excellent vocation you appear to have adopted. Fear not that I should by any imprudence betray you;” and he laid a stress on the word as he looked searchingly into his comrade’s face, which was involuntarily drooped as he felt the dishonourable contrast his own baseness and treachery offered to Renmore’s.

“ Oh! *you* would not betray me, I am aware; but we can never be too cautious,” replied Quandish, doggedly.

“ Between *friends* such an event would be, I should trust, impossible!” replied Renmore, in a tone and with an air of frankness. “ But,” he continued, lowering his voice as if in the confidence of that friendship he knew so well to simulate,—“ but all are not equally friendly, my dear Simm—I beg your pardon—Quandish—as yourself. I have too much reason to apprehend there are enemies abroad,—at least, of myself, (I hope not also of you as well,)—who, I fear, would scarcely hold the balance of honour so nicely as not willingly to see it outpoised by the low sin of treachery.”

Every word he spoke probed to the core of his

comrade's sense of his own secret villany ; though there was little feeling of compunction wounded, so far as to be taught to swerve from its dogged baseness of purpose.

“ What enemies are abroad ? ” he answered, hastily, and with an awkwardly feigned surprise. “ I know of none ! ”

“ I have reason to apprehend they are nearer to us than is altogether safe or agreeable,” continued Renmore in the same vein of delicate sarcasm. “ For to judge by a placard, offering a reward for the apprehension of your old friend Hatfield, I cannot but conclude that some base spirit has been dodging my movements hither, with a view to obtain this price of my blood ; nay, perhaps this baseness may be increased by the circumstance of his having been a co-partner in my—indiscretions.”

His surly comrade was silent a moment, when both his native churlishness and his desire to repel either the insinuation of manners at one time, or the sarcasm at another, of our hero, now taught him to find a tongue.

“ It is all very well, Hatfield,” he exclaimed, angrily, as he turned hastily round, and fiercely eyeing his companion, who met his ruffian scowl with a placid smile,—“ I see plainly enough you are directing your remarks against myself.”

“Nay; I should be sorry to think you were conscious of their applicability!”

“What if I am conscious of it! I shall gain little credit with the world for keeping terms with such a notorious character as James Hatfield.”

“Permit me to correct you there. You favoured me with setting me right as to the name *you* had found it convenient to adopt. I ought to make a similar disclosure to you. It is but a reciprocation of confidence between friends. In a word, James Hatfield is merged and sunk at present in a title which I hope you will find equally distinguished,—I am now Colonel Renmore—the Honourable Colonel Renmore, M.P., at your service.”

“Curse on his unconquerable coolness and easy assurance,” growled out Quandish to himself, when he continued to Renmore, “Have I spoken plainly enough, when I tell you I shall have no credit for keeping terms with you? Why, let me ask, should not I be benefited by claiming the reward as well as any one else?”

“Oh, certainly! I should be delighted to think that any *friend* of mine was benefited by my means—through my influence,” he added, as he laughed. “I am sure you cannot doubt this, when you call to mind the not unpleasing experience, I hope, which you have had of my good will towards you.”

And here the unfeeling churl found it difficult to crush the whisperings that upbraided him as an ingrate of the blackest dye. In the words of Renmore he was recalled to the circumstance of the latter having not very long ago taken compassion on him, and relieved him in the deepest exigency. Yes, in order to afford him the relief solicited, Renmore had actually incurred the fatal responsibility of forging a bill of exchange, the result of which was the succour of this fiend more than man—this Quandish—and his own proscription ! It is true, that subsequently to this transaction, which took place in Dublin, Quandish had rendered himself jointly liable by falsely testifying a bond to which Renmore affixed the fictitious signature of the alleged principal ; but this subsequent act, in which both were involved in a similar peril, did not cancel the debt of gratitude due from Quandish, or rather Simmonds, to his benefactor. He was an accomplice in guilt, indeed, with Renmore ; but was *he* the man to betray the other, in consequence of any “compunctious visitings” on the score of delinquency ? Not he ! He was of sterner material,—much too stern to be accessible to a thought even of gratitude—nay, scarcely of acknowledgment. It was enough for him to think he had now the vantage ground of Renmore, on whose head a price was set, and for whose sacrifice the less accom-

plished delinquency of others would be forgiven by the government. The immolation of our hero at the shrine of justice was looked forward to as in itself a hecatomb ! He was the "scape-goat" on whose head the crimes of others were to be visited . . . but softly—it must be when his pursuers could catch him ! . . . This was not altogether so easy to effect as we may hereafter further discover.

Quandish soon rallied, and, with the hardened effrontery that marks ingratitude, strove, in the blustering style of his reply, to outface the consciousness of his own baseness, as he replied abruptly, and without directly answering the other, "Oh ! I never rake up old stories of past matters ; I only look to the present. If you had not helped me out of the scrape, I should have found other means, and——"

"I trust sincerely you would," interposed Renmore, while the other continued—

"And as to the present matter, what is it to me whether you call me a traitor or not ? I can afford to bear this and worse names, if you please to heap them on me ; but I cannot afford to lose the chance of turning a penny, be it in an honest way, and——"

"An honest way !" observed Renmore, smiling : "true, true ! . . . I admire your honesty . . ."

"I tell you plainly, without more words, the

money would be acceptable." And here he added, with a ferocious chuckle, "Traitor ! . . . why the world would say I did a public service, and applaud me for the betrayal."

"Permit me to suggest that the executioner, under whose hand possibly both you and myself may one day be doomed to fall, performs, indeed, a public service ; but his office is yet loathed by the world."

"Well, well, we will not bandy arguments on that matter," replied Quandish, glad to escape from the disagreeable suggestion of the gallows, at the thought of which he trembled with a consciousness how much he deserved it. Renmore, more confident in his genius and resources of escape, smiled at the involuntary fear of his former accomplice, and despised him for it yet more, as he replied, in a tone of irony—

"Nay, where there is so much candour of avowal we have little need to bandy argument. I admire you for your frankness. Necessity is not the fault of a man, but his misfortune. No doubt the money would be acceptable—what is it ?" and as Renmore inquired this, he was by this time tolerably well convinced that no appeal to the ruffian's sense of gratitude or forbearance would be of any avail.

"A hundred guineas !" ejaculated the savage, eagerly, his whole soul so much absorbed in the

thought of grasping the treasure, that he was utterly forgetful what must be the feelings of the man he was addressing, and whose blood was to be bartered for with that gold.

“ A very acceptable sum !—though, after all, but a trifle—soon run through ! Yet, no doubt, under pressing exigency, not unacceptable. I don’t really know,” he added, smiling, “ whether I would not surrender myself for such a consideration, were I out of pocket at the moment !”

Quandish stared at his contemplated victim with a mixture of surprise at his apparent indifference, and a ferocity rendered more disgusting by the loathsome calculation of the sum he hoped to attain by selling his blood. Renmore continued, in the same careless and cheerful vein—

“ Well, well, to leave jesting on so serious a subject—(not of course as my life—a fellow-creature’s life)—but the receipt of a hundred guineas ! To speak seriously on the matter, you shall have the hundred guineas without the trouble of betraying—I meant to say, of leading on the hue and cry after me ; for I might give my pursuers a tolerably puzzling chase,” he added, looking with good-humoured significance into the half-withdrawn face of his comrade. “ What say you ?”

“ Gently, my gallant Colonel—what is your new name ?” replied Quandish, with a brutal jocularity.

You offer me no more than it is in my power to make already ! You want to buy me off with——”

“Oh, to be sure !” interposed Renmore, with equal ease and good-humour. “I perceive what you would say. Suppose, then, we double the consideration,—and in return for a promissory note, payable a month hence——”

“A month hence?” was the surly objection.

“Yes; for the better certainty of payment, let us fix a month hence. It would be equally agreeable to me to say a fortnight, three weeks, or even now——”

“Well, well; a month hence,” replied Quandish. “The time will soon slip away,” he added to himself. “But what security have I that you will not make your escape? Mark me, Hatfield ! it is in vain for you to attempt an exit at any seaport ! Mark me ! I shall watch your movements, so that you do not escape me !”

“By all means ! I admire your vigilance. It bespeaks you a clever ‘man of business !’” You need not apprehend that I shall fail in my payment. I have various inducements to keep me on the spot !” So saying, he coolly took out his pocket-book and wrote a promissory note to the above effect, adding, as he placed it in Quandish’s hand, “And in return for this, you will cancel all

those liberal bits of printed paper offering the government largess for my apprehension——”

“Ay, ay; the bills at Keswick and elsewhere shall be pulled down,” said Quandish, doggedly.

“And it might be as well to suggest to the officers of justice, who may possibly be in quest of me, that there is reason to conclude the game has winged off in a different direction—in case, that is, (he added, significantly,) you should be aware of their being so occupied.”

Quandish turned away from the polite sneer which characterized this suggestion, as he muttered out—“Yes, yes; it shall all be done,—you need not fear.”

“And now, this little negotiation at an end, let us talk over our adventures since we parted. Let me see; you had taken a school, had you not? and flourished like any peripatetic of the ancient academus?”

“The concern didn’t answer—didn’t answer!” replied Quandish, somewhat abashed at the inquiry. The fact is, the man, or rather brute, had been dismissed from the possession of a lucrative pedagogueship in consequence of the ill-treatment, beating, starving, &c., of the scholars. Behold, here, another specimen of his gratitude! Will it be believed?—this appointment

had been gained him through the adroit solicitation of Renmore again! The first instance of assistance, already mentioned, had been afforded Quandish at a period when he had become a bankrupt in the business he had previously followed; the last was afforded him subsequently to the transaction at Dublin, already touched on,—and how was it repaid? Why, the moment this Quandish had forfeited his situation of pedagogue by his cruelty, he addressed himself in the exigency that ensued by trying to hunt out his benefactor, now a fugitive from the myrmidons of justice, in order to grasp the reward offered for his apprehension! Of all men, Quandish, or Simmonds, was the best calculated to lead the pack in pursuit; as he was, from former acquaintance, better able to suggest what Renmore's plan of action would be. It was his invariable rule when pursuit was a-foot to throw out reports of his having moved in a certain direction, while, meantime, he "doubled," as a hare does, back to the spot of his starting. Such was the case at present. He had fled from Dublin, first of all, to London; and then, had attempted to return to the former place, but apprehending detection at Liverpool, had struck off northward, and was hotly pursued till he embarked at Ravensglass, under the pilotage of no other than the ancient mariner. He took this direction not by

any means with a view to return to Liverpool—whither his pursuers hied in order to meet him if possible,—but to land higher up on the same coast, and adjourn across the hill-country to the neighbourhood of Penrith and Keswick. Here Quandish had traced him, calculating his probable movements; when he was thrown somewhat off the scent by learning at Keswick that no one at all answering the description in the handbills had been there. Various strangers had been there indeed, but all had gone in a different direction; or even if they had not, how was it to be asserted that amongst the various names of “Lord this”—“Sir John that”—and “Colonel the other”—that of the fugitive was concealed? All the names were of distinction, or respectability; and as for Colonel Renmore—why it was positively asserted he had gone into the north, of course to the seat of his family—“Clanrenmore, county Caithness!” Meantime, the retired little haunt of Buttermere, nested in the mountains, seemed precisely the spot for our hero to bend his steps towards; and after wandering about the country for some time in various disguises, he at length sought a final refuge here. Singular was it that in the meantime Quandish had also sought out Buttermere as his retreat, making repeated visits to Keswick and its neighbourhood to search for the fugitive. Old Mike would

have called this collision the decree of "destiny!" At length, having despaired of "the reward," he set his wits to work, and endeavoured, by the trade of sanctimony and a vehement style of holding-forth to the ignorant peasantry, to put pence into his pocket. In this he succeeded, and in fact was speedily extolled as a favourite preacher, especially by the pious matrons of the place; amongst the foremost of whom was dame Wetherby. The preacher was of course invited to their evening tea-tables; and in one of these pious entertainments having seen Gertrude, and feeling the control he possessed over her mother's mind, he bethought him of proposing an alliance with her, at fit time and opportunity. How far he was acceptable to Gertrude we have already witnessed! By a secret instinct she shunned him as though destined to be the enemy of her peace, and never had her guileless and tranquil spirit known one turbid dream until it had been haunted by the hypocritic leer, the ill-disguised ruffian scowl, the uncouth address, and the ungainly figure of Quandish. She shuddered and fled as he approached her parent's threshold, regarding him as something worse than man. Little need we wonder that our hero, offering so exalted at once and so engaging a contrast to a being so little acceptable, should have found no unready

access to her heart! A contrast indeed does he offer!—a contrast that renders his very delinquency interesting, as compared with the foul aspect guilt wore in the ingrate Simmonds! If we repelled any claim of interest for our hero on the ground of adroit villany, we cannot yet help feeling, in spite of ourselves, the force of the claim, when thus, again, it is exhibited in contrast with a foil so sordid! His villany is positively virtue compared to the baseness of the late schoolmaster, bankrupt, criminal, and present dissenting preacher! If hypocrisy characterizes both Quandish and his wished-for victim—yet who can look on the ruffian aspect, the churlish, moody mystery, and low, base cunning, it wears in the one, and not experience relief and breathe freely again in contemplating the engaging and graceful aspect of the gay, courteous dissimulation of the happier artist? The contrast forces itself on us, and we could not avoid a remark on it; more especially as it was so strongly, no less than reasonably, felt by Gertrude herself. But these necessary remarks over, let us pursue the conversation, to its conclusion, between Renmore and “his friend.”

“Ah! I’m sorry to learn that any unpleasant circumstances arose to induce you to quit the situation,—(that of the pedagogueship,)—but it is too

often the case that these contradictions arise at a season when we feel it most inconvenient. You were nicely settled."

Little did Quandish imagine, from the careless, good-humoured tone of inquiry, that Renmore knew as well as himself the reason of his relinquishing his *metier* of pedagogue; but our hero amused himself with applying the lash "delicately" to the other's conscience, or sense of shame, if such an ingredient in his composition existed.

"Ahem—ahem—yes; very decently settled," blundered out Quandish, jerking his head up, and clearing his throat; "but don't let us talk of that any more."

"Not a word—not a word! Any subject that distresses a friend is no less painful to us than our own causes of regret," replied Renmore, as he proceeded in the same delicate process of infliction; of course, in perfect seeming innocence and kindly intention. "But your wife and family——"

"Curses on him!" ejaculated Quandish to himself, in a suppressed growl, as his brutal ferocity of temper here almost gained the ascendancy over his discretion. . . . "Why, I thought you knew my wife was dead——"

"God bless me!" observed Renmore, with an air of concern, of which it is difficult to say whether it was most feigned or serious; "I am exceedingly

hurt at the intelligence—her death must have been sudden ;” and he cast a significant glance at the ruffian he more than suspected of being her assassin.

Quandish drew back his head involuntarily, and turned his face aside, as he muttered out the reply, “ Ay, ay ; it was somewhat sudden.”

“ Yes ; her health was delicate, if I remember right ; yet no treatment could have been kinder than yours——”

[“ Torments on his head !” exclaimed the incensed and goaded ruffian to himself ; “ I must break away from him. He would master the foul fiend himself !”] Renmore continued—

“ And the unhappy children she left behind her. . . . Your family ? . . . Are the poor little creatures well ?” . . . And here Renmore’s voice and manner wore too much the earnestness of kindness, and tacit reproach of the unnatural father who had deserted them, to be mistaken for acting or dissimulation.

“ I wish you would ask me no more of these family matters,” replied Quandish, with a savage impatience he found it impossible any longer to suppress ; “ they were all well enough when I last saw them. But I can stay no longer here talking ;—all that it was necessary to settle between us has been done ; so good-night to you.”

“Good-night!” replied Renmore. “What! are you in such a hurry to quit an old friend? I should have wished to ask you to come and pass the remainder of the evening with me at my retreat at dame Wetherby’s.”

Of course, when he said this, our hero knew his offer would be declined; and for this reason he had lacerated the spirit of the ruffian before him, in order to be saved from his loathsome intrusion, which might have been inflicted on him had he rendered himself less an object of dread to the man.

“No, no; I can’t very well come this evening—I—I—”

“Well, well! let me look forward to that pleasure on some future occasion. At the same time, as we shall possibly be crossing each other’s path during our mutual residence in this spot, it would perhaps be as well for us to maintain the outward appearance of being strangers to each other, in order to avoid any questions as regarding one another, which might be inconvenient.”

“By all means!—by all means!” exclaimed Quandish, glad to seize at the proposal, since he dreaded as much as Renmore did any disclosure to Gertrude or her mother of himself. He dreaded any disclosure of his acquaintance in crime with “the Colonel;” and last of all, though not least,—of

the "awkward affair" of his late wife's sudden death, and the bitter tale of his deserted offspring ! A mystery, doubtless, hung about the decease of his wife that he was perhaps better able to explain than any one else, and had reasons for keeping hushed. And now he was about to stride away from the tantalizing complaisance and friendliness of our accomplished hero in the art of teasing, when he was called back for a moment.

"Remember, then, the money is forthcoming at the time specified, on condition of all pursuit being immediately suspended."

"Yes, yes," replied Quandish, impatiently, and with an outward submission, too, which bespoke him thoroughly vanquished, not less by our hero's address than his own conscious guilt. "I am going to Keswick this very night."

"It is well ! the moon is up, and you will have a charming ramble along the meer-side. Shall I accompany you a short distance ?"

"No, no !—much obliged ! I have to call at the place where I reside first — and . . . good-night, good-night !"

So saying, the ruffian made what haste he could to avoid the perplexing path of the arch master, under whom he had been undergoing such a "spirit movement," such a castigation of his shrinking baseness.

His square, ungainly form had scarcely been lost in the shadows of the glade, than Renmore, looking after him, said, after a moment's pause, in which some reflection that flattered him was bespoken in the smile that played on his lip, "What a thing it is to possess a knowledge of human character! What man is there whose disposition has not been interpreted by me at almost a glance? Be it intuition, or what it may, it is a sort of master-key which kindly opens for me the wards of all locks that guard either conscience or character! Possessed of this, the work of making one's way in the world is easy. Have I not played with men as with puppets?" And here he shrugged up his shoulders and smiled. . . . "So now, I have once again a little breathing space; the heat of pursuit is cooled; the cry of the hounds fades from the dizzy ear of the panting quarry! It is well; I will now be myself again. These good people of the neighbourhood—Esdaile, the Lawtons, the Howbiggens, and the rest—shall have no further cause to wonder and debate about my 'distance' and habits of seclusion. And Gertrude, the thought of you, my sweet! of your tenderness and beauty, shall no more be disturbed—at least for a season—by the endless alarm or apprehension of being dragged from your very feet to the foot of the scaffold!"

So saying, our hero proceeded along the avenue, with lighter step than had borne him many a day, in the same direction as he had come after the hasty leave he had taken of Gertrude, as described previously to his meeting the preacher. The sound of voices that had warned him so abruptly away on that occasion merely proceeded from dame Wetherby and those female gossips who had accompanied her back on her return home, and were shortly about to repair to their respective homes in the village. The brawling of the little brook that ran at the back of the premises now echoed on his ear softened through the silence. He paused for a moment, as he had now reached the rustic bridge by which it was crossed, and admired the tranquil charin of the night, as he gave himself up to happier dreams, and less alloyed with bitterness than he had experienced for some time past. "Security" had long indeed been a dream to him. Well might he answer back its peaceful challenge with gratitude, as he smiled through reflections so pleasing. And here, as he raised his head round to contemplate the sombre shadows of the Scotch firs on the hill-brow above, tinted as they were with the silver moonlight, that seemed as though it shone on them to soften their austerity, his eye was caught by a light of another description. It seemed to flit backwards and forwards, like a Will-o'-the-wisp,

along the ascent of the hill. He watched it for some little time, when it suddenly disappeared. "Can that be," he said to himself, "Quandish proceeding on his Keswick errand, with torch or lantern to guide him? Not so! nor is that the direction for him to take. Can it be old Mike's track that yonder light shines over? Old Mike! If I was inclined hitherto to be sceptical as to his superstition, may I not smile at it now? May I not tell him how triumphantly I have just combated what he terms my 'destiny?' Nay; he will be happy to hear it; for the good old mariner evinces a real interest in my safety. I promised to come to his cell; I wonder if he is there? I long to tell him how I have managed this ingrate—this Judas; how I have checked pursuit, gratified avarice, won myself security—all! The night is fine, and——"

Here, as if it shone by way of reply to his surmise of Mike's being at his cell, the light glimmered forth again, and seemed to beckon him to seek it out. "It is a mystic reply, and worthy old Mike; if, indeed, it proceeds from his weird abode," thought our hero, as he smiled, while he turned now from the brook and proceeded to the brow of the hill, beneath the shadows of which his form was speedily lost.

CHAPTER XVII.

“In me communion with this purest being
Kindled intenser zeal.”

SHELLEY.

THE week had now stolen on, and the morning of Sunday had dawned. It was the day on which Miss Howbiggen (as we may remember) looked forward to a “grand dinner-party” at her residence, “in which,” the Buttermere Morning Post (if there had been such a chronicle) would have announced that, “all the *élite* of the neighbourhood was to be comprised.” However, the only herald or chronicle that reminded the little world of Buttermere of its daily duties, painful or pleasant, was that which was blazoned in characters of light by the all-glorious hand of the dread Creator, and which announced to all in the waking sun-beam, that the present day was sacred to himself.

The old dial-plate in the village church-yard on which that sun-beam shone, wore the solemn motto,

graven in quaint characters, *FINEM RESPICE*, thus pointing perpetually to the dread hour of doom; and, at present in particular, to the hour of worship that was to prepare for it.

The chime of those hallowed bells, softened by the echoes of the meer banks, stole not more sweetly on the ear than the hallowed language they spoke stole upon the heart! And with no bosom did they sound more in concord than with that of a person who now meets us in the precincts of the village cemetery. They vibrated indeed on a heart tuned to celestial harmony—on a heart that felt the “fulness” of lofty joy at the recurrence of the present day’s solemnities. Not merely, however, was it on account of his approval of religious observance and the social decorum of the Sabbath that Golefield (for such was his name) gazed on the villagers in their decent Sunday attire with lively interest; his meditations took (as was their wont) a higher flight, and indulged in a loftier view of the subject. As he looked at them with a countenance at once thoughtful and benign, he exclaimed, “The humblest in the walks of life may now be called to feelings that will raise them above ‘thrones and dominions!’ It is in the ‘tuning’ of their minds to lofty strains, the making different beings of them, that the progress ‘to church’ of those villagers strikes me. Yes; be

religion true or false," (he continued to himself, as he wandered along through the grassy files of brier-trellissed biers,) "yet in calling the mind to themes lofty and divine, it purifies and exalts mankind, and weans him from worldly matters and the baser cares of humanity—fretful, sordid, and grovelling! Even were religion but an ordinance enjoining all 'good subjects' to listen once a week to a solemn oration, descanting on any high and glorious matter, it would be a salutary exercise for the mind, and would 'tune it' to nobler themes than those of its daily strife. It would be refined, awe-struck, filled with a rapture that is holy! It would be elevated to loftier musings than those of earth and earthly feud.—This too is religion!"

"Yes, indeed, it is religion," said an elderly and benevolent-looking person, who now came up to the philosopher and poet, (for such he was;) "but though a safe religion for minds akin to heaven, such as your own; yet, for less naturally good and sage spirits, it is requisite that the authority of heaven itself should place its seal on this high mental discipline. Man! rash and blind!—Would he (think you) listen to the admonitions, however exalted, however affectionate, held out to him by his fellow-man, unless the person that addressed him were as it were the mouthpiece of God's own oracle?"

“True, true, my dear Mr. Fenton,” replied Golefield; “you know me too well to think that I could feel otherwise than you have so justly expressed. I may add, too, to your remark, that I wish the ‘mouthpiece’ you mention were, generally speaking, the oracle, like yourself, of love and clemency, rather than one of terror and denunciation. Obedience is better secured by awaking a sense of the first—by calling the heart to listen to their harmonies,—ay! as of seraph harps!”

“Indeed, it were better, ever,” said the mild and benevolent pastor, “to take pleasure in soothing pain rather than exciting it; in holding out hope and blessing, rather than pain and the blackness of despair!” . . . But, just at this moment their attention was called to the circumstance of a venerable figure passing them wrapped up in the ample folds of a large grey cloak: his hat, with its shallow crown and wide brim, was forced very much over his brow, and his piercing eyes as they glanced keenly from under his hat rivetted attention to his countenance. He seemed to regard Fenton with a look of wild curiosity, and Golefield’s countenance less so, and as though he had seen it before; for a smile of recognition just made itself apparent on his lip. He passed as hastily by as his years would permit his bowed figure to proceed; and as he now pursued his way to the church-porch, Golefield inquired of

his reverend companion, "who the venerable stranger was?" "I think," he added, "I have seen his face before, but cannot recall the period, or circumstance, of our meeting."

"I fancied, too, I had seen a countenance something like his. At first, I thought, by the silvery locks that escaped from under his hat, that it was old Mike. I fancied, too, I had seen the good old mariner (for so he is, despite the rude village superstitions concerning him) in a cloak somewhat like his."

"In truth, he did bear a certain resemblance in his outward guise to my good friend the ancient mariner," replied Golefield. "But how often do we come across faces that we fancy we know, or have known, and after all they are merely features that have impressed us in some cursory glance; as we have, perchance, met them casually, amidst the wide, living 'phantasmagoria' that floated by."

And here the "philosophic dreamer" (for such, too, indeed he was) amused himself with following some train of musings or association of ideas that arose in his mind, of forms, of faces, of scenes, of conversations, he had erewhile known; when suddenly looking round for his reverend companion, he found he had left him, being called away, not only to be in readiness to proceed upon his sacred duties, but

to answer the affectionate greetings of high, low, rich, and poor, that thronged round the "good Mr. Fenton," (as we have heretofore mentioned he was called,) whose presence in the pulpit of Buttermere was on the special occasion of delivering a charity-sermon in behalf of the village-school. We remember Gertrude's advertising our hero of this circumstance some little time ago, and from her also we have been made acquainted that Fenton's "cure" (for though a long and worthy worker in the field of religion, he was still only a "curate") was at the village of Lorton, a place no less deviously than beautifully situated amidst romantic hills and crags, about nine or ten miles distant; and whither we shall, perchance, at some future period, be called on to invite our reader through the mazes of our story. The great popularity of Fenton marked him out above all others as a person likely to promote the hallowed purposes of charity by his presence and advocacy. In fact, there was scarcely a parish supporting a charitable institution in the county that did not endeavour to avail itself of the sacred services of "the good Mr. Fenton, the curate of Lorton," to promote its cause.

Golefield, on finding himself alone again, remarked of Fenton, "Ay, he is a man that induces us to love, not only piety as inculcated by our

church, but the body, too, that represents his sacred calling. He is an ornament to society, and a blessing at once . . .” but here a quick trampling of feet roused him again from another fit of that characteristic musing that constantly absorbed him. He raised up his head, and beheld the objects of Fenton’s advocacy at the church of Buttermere on this day,—the village school-children, dressed in their little, old-fashioned, yet decent grey coats, and the girls in cloaks of the same colour, proceeding in a file of two and two up to the church-porch. Golefield stood apart, meeting their smiling faces with a smile too of benevolence, and nodding to many a little friend whose acquaintance it had been a pleasure to him to earn with a piece of gingerbread or a handful of marbles. In fact, the philosopher was scarcely less amiable, scarcely less a promoter (“as far as in him lay”) of human happiness, than his reverend friend the curate of Lorton. He was, like this excellent person, beloved alike by the peasant and the man of “prouder estate.”

“It is a pleasure to see the children look so healthy, neat, and happy,” said a person, addressing Golefield, as he passed on to the church. It was Routhmore ; a person of a more practical mind and more ardent temperament than Golefield,—a man of as vivid intellect, but less vaguely speculative than the other was inclined to be,—less fond of

pursuing the dreams of his fancy, or the ingenuity of his reason, for the mere metaphysical pleasure it afforded. This delight, as that of a bird soaring through the blue ether, was a sufficient reward to Golefield, as indeed it is the greatest and sweetest reward to the poetical mind. Society, perhaps, may consider itself more indebted for the utility of his mental pursuits to Routhmore, who applied the stores of his lore, the researches of his mind, and the zeal of his pen, to more practical purposes. The one was carried away uncontrollably by his imagination, and by the extreme fecundity of his fancies, which dazzled him no less by their beauty than they tempted him from all neighbourhood of the practical track, by the boldness, height, and extent of their expatiation. The philosopher, or dreamer himself, was held under a charm by the spell exercised over him by his own mind. To look at him smiling through his dream, you could perceive he was beguiled to a world which he could not (if he would) consent to exchange for the practical realities of the social world around him. Few, then, could follow Golefield, or, consequently, sympathize with him. Every one must admire him; but if there was much to dazzle mankind in his speculations, there was little tangible. Routhmore, on the other hand, shaped his philosophy more to human improvement than to mere

mental expatiation. In the moral causes he advocated, no one could outstrip him in vivacity of intellect and style or ardour of feeling ; but he ever adhered to the bounds of the social scope, and felt satisfied if he could win sympathy within the pale of his fellow-men, rather than sun himself in the beams of happy dreams, that, however delightful in themselves, were yet unsubstantial. The one wished as well to the cause of society as the other ; but Golefield's mind was so constituted, that it indulged in a sort of intellectual Arcadia, which, as regarded the interests of society, painted life and human character as he wished to see it, and not as it well could be. Routhmore's zeal led him to combat the prejudices of man ; nor less the daring presumption of man. It led him to a more reasonable code, whose beauty, in his view, was its utility, its greater practical perfection. Did empirics wish to overthrow sound institutions by rash innovations ? Routhmore was the champion whose zeal pursued them to the last gasp that gave them breath to run. His vivid style, and searching, keen, and lofty argument, was ever the foremost, as it was the most effective, to expose their errors, —to shame them into a better habit of thinking. In placing the reasons for their doing so in the most attractive light, by shewing the amelioration that society, and the condition of human happiness,

would derive from abjuring their untenable scruples—he led to improvement in the most certain way. No two men, therefore, could be more essentially different in their mental characteristics than Golefield and Routhmore. No two men saw each other's mental excellences and beauties with a greater willingness to pay deference to them reciprocally. The simplicity of character of Golefield in society agreed well with his intellectual character as the "child of Fancy,"—the plaything of self-wrought dreams,—for his dreams swayed him more than he swayed or controlled his dreams; for, as we have already said, they carried him away on their wing beyond all bounds of pursuit, or sympathy from those around him. He was a feather on the wind with which they bore him. To observe him, to hear him speak, his spirit eagerly looking through his eye and countenance at the bright illusions that played before it, you felt the "thing of clay" was lost—the man Golefield was lost,—and a personification of mind, or spirit, glowed before you!

This difference of their characteristics and temperament was witnessed, too, in their countenances. The simple, benevolent look and expression, betokening happiness in itself, which characterized Golefield, was strongly contrasted with the animated, keen countenance of Routhmore. Their features were not more different than the ruddy, hale

complexion of the dreamer-bard and metaphysician differed from that of the darker and more swarthy traits of the zealous scholar, critic, and moral philosopher, Routhmore.

But not to dwell any longer on this "analysis" of character of two individuals so distinguished,—(though to have said less would have been an injustice both to the reader and to them,)—we will take up the conversation between them for the few moments that the church-bells yet permitted it to continue, ere their chime should end, and warn them no longer to delay from the sacred threshold.

Golefield replied to Routhmore's remark on the cleanliness and happiness of the school-children—

"Ay, it is a delight to see them! I view them with mingled feelings of pleasure at their happiness, and shame at myself."

"How so? The conclusion is scarcely deducible from so benevolent and good a premise," replied Routhmore, smiling, as his companion put his arm into his, while they strolled on by the side of the children to the church-door.

"Why, 'shame' to think that we, with all our boasted wisdom, are scarcely so truly wise as those little beings in their innocent ignorance!"

"Nay, all humanity is imperfection; hence it is that we fail in wisdom. But, surely the exercise of matured reason renders us superior (though imper-

fect, no doubt, in our views from the very weakness of our nature) to the unmatured and tender mind?"

"Why, that little yellow-haired fellow, who has stepped out of the rank to pick a honeysuckle flower from the stem over yonder grass-green bier, is worthier of admiration than you or I! . . . With all our wisdom, our efforts to discover that 'moot point' to the end of time,—the 'greatest good to the greatest number,'—we are not yet so truly in possession of the desideratum—'happiness'—as that child!"

"Truly so," replied Routhmore; "the reflection certainly is humiliating to us, to think how much in vain we strive towards the light. But, to quit this vein of regret at our essential weakness as men, rather than argue that 'innocent childishness' is worthier of admiration in its happiness than 'praiseworthy effort' in its failure through human imperfection,—to quit this, let us rather contemplate the blessing imparted to these children and society by the happy system of education these 'Sunday-school' establishments promote. The prospect my mind more willingly pursues is, the refinement of the spirit—the amelioration of the moral principle—the diminution of crime—the practical benefit to the country—the blessing to mankind."

"And yet—to think, my dear Routhmore, that

all this 'refining' of the spirit does but foster the growth of sensibilities which shall sharpen (it may be) the future pangs of remorse, and render the heart less happy than even it would have been in the numbness of feeling ere it was thus refined."

"This is the tax incumbent on all good, in the social or moral world. You speak too much as a 'poet!'—you suffer feeling to gain the ascendancy over reason!—you look too far! and in doing so, consider too slightly the real merits of an essential good, and a great social benefit."

"Well, you are right," said his meditative companion, with the benign smile of an assent that felt his friend spoke truly, and that yet there was also a "pleasing pain" in his own views and feelings which he would be unwilling altogether to forego. But the last chime of the bell had now sounded as their feet were on the sacred threshold. They entered, and were soon wrapt in the hallowed themes which spoke to the heart, the feelings, no less than imagination and reason. Those themes, too, won impressiveness from the bland yet chastely solemn manner of Fenton. There was a shade yet of sorrow over that benign aspect. There was a tone of sorrow also, mingling with those accents of hope and benevolence, that insensibly stole upon the hearer; while the heart, no less than the eye, followed the preacher. But there was no one of

all present whose heart or eye seemed to follow him with more deeply felt interest than those of the venerable stranger that not long ago had attracted the notice of Golefield and Fenton, as they were conversing in the church-yard. Whether there was any peculiar source of interest to this person, in aught connected with the "good curate," beyond that of the present exercise of his hallowed function, we are unable to say. Being a stranger in the place, his appearance, as may be expected, excited attention, coupled with a certain degree of curiosity to know "who he could be?" The eyes of the "good folk" present were therefore "sundry times" turned towards him, nor did the interest he evinced in regarding the preacher escape them. Nay; those who sate in a position to mark the workings of his countenance, and the expression of the old man's feature, declared they could detect a tear glisten in his eye after he had regarded the face of Fenton with intent earnestness for some time. After all, it might be but the dimness of sight, the weakness of age's vision, to which this appearance was to be attributed. Be this, however, as it may, those who can read the heart through the countenance would not have pronounced much amiss had they deemed that sorrow and regret were scarcely less marked on those venerable traits than attention to the preacher,

or devotion for the theme he uttered. But if the aged stranger had attracted any notice, it was destined speedily to be called away from him, and directed to a "phenomenon" of the other sex which now made its appearance, arrayed in a style that fully justified the transient gape of the congregation as it advanced up the aisle. During this portentous interval, even the heads of the auditory were turned away from the estimable preacher. In fact, the "phenomenon" (or "*mega thauma*," as old Homer would have termed it) was irresistible. Its "irruption," too, into the sacred edifice, at the advanced stage to which the service had now arrived, rendered the circumstance more conspicuous and "gape-provoking!" Of course, we must not pronounce on the merits of the fashion of a past day by a reference to that which is at present the prevailing taste; but no doubt the lady in question knew well what was becoming when she appeared in a blue satin hat lined with pink, exhibiting further two portentous rosettes of the dimensions of peonies over each ear, just as coach-horses are decorated, or rather "garnished." But this is not all. We are but a short way upon our progress to the interesting *tout ensemble*. A beautiful buff dress, buttoned all down the front, (the complete rage, by-the-bye—the mania of the day!) with large lilac-coloured buttons, commands next our

homage; the same, be it observed, being enhanced in effect by a rich border of lilac also, which stood out "in splendid relief" from the more sober ground of buff. Well; over her shoulders our lovely "phenomenon" wore a "charming" bright amber-coloured shawl, with a border and fringe of black; while a capacious collar, bordered with Valenciennes lace, exhibited its snow-white contrast to the amber hues of the shawl. No lady, we are confident, could survey herself in the glass in such a costume, and not pronounce herself "attractive" beyond all doubt; and to this just and laudable conclusion Miss Howbiggen (for it is herself who proceeds up the aisle before us) arrived, no doubt, when she decorated herself in it. That a little time was taken over a toilette of such "curious taste" cannot be questioned; and hence must she be excused for making her appearance at the present somewhat advanced state of the service, the psalms being nearly concluded. She was followed by her estimable brother, coughing the whole way up the aisle; as much, perhaps, from impatience at her delay, which doubtless nearly choked him with grumbling, as from any cold or weakness of trachea. His irritation was less of the lungs or throat than of the temper. But the grand question, after all, has not been solved—namely, in reference to what person in particular it was that

Miss Howbiggen had rendered herself so particularly attractive? For it is scarcely to be supposed that, however universally "obliging" her disposition was, she should have so far taken pains to render herself an object of admiration to the mere worthy but ordinary group of the Buttermere congregation. No; we cannot, then, be at a loss to pronounce that she certainly must have had "the Hon. Colonel Renmore, M.P., of Clanrenmore, county Caithness," in contemplation, as she surveyed herself in the full-length toilette glass, and emerged, like another Iris, in the resplendence of "many colours"—buff, lilac, black, and amber! . . . By-the-bye, yet more, (the Graces forgive us!) we had forgotten one great essential in this costume, and as particularly exemplifying the fashion of the day,—this was, the red heel to the boot; the upper portion of which was, in the delicate and chaste contrast, yet still no less striking one, of white satin. But the "red heels" were the great point of interest in the costume of the day, just as the "high heels" or "choppines" of the olden time were in their day; and a curious account of which may be seen in "Tom Coryate's Crudities;" not to mention that this gear is memorialized in Shakspeare's Hamlet. Now, if a figure so well worthy to attract admiration as that which Miss Howbiggen exhibited was not enough to charm a

whole regiment, to say nothing of one stray colonel, we are at a loss to say what would. But alas! the contradiction of destiny!—the wayward sway of that envious law that thwarts everlastingly our fondest expectations! The very person against whom this battery of attraction was to be directed was actually out of the way—“*non est inventus!*” Now, Miss Howbiggen very reasonably regretted being deprived of the pleasure of seeing Colonel Renmore, since he was to be her guest that day. In fact, he had at length (according to the intimation expressed by him at the close of our preceding chapter) accepted her “advances towards drawing him out,”—that is, an invitation to dine; while Mr. Howbiggen, with characteristic bearishness, called it “worrying the man from his privacy.” No wonder, then, that Miss Howbiggen was a little chagrined at not seeing our hero. Alack! to think that the curious and grateful study of that toilette should be “labour lost!” And who knows? it might be “Love’s Labour Lost!” For that Miss Howbiggen had conceived a strong interest in the Colonel must already have been witnessed, beyond the possibility of a doubt. With difficulty did she restrain her impatience, and the expression of her disappointment, till the conclusion of the service; when she did so, it was to her “sympathizing” brother,—and what think you he had the grace to reply?

“He, he, he!—ugh, ugh, ugh!” (the cough and giggle were interwoven together like the dingy shades of a pair of “thunder and lightning” coloured stockings,) “the Colonel does quite right to keep away, if he doesn’t wish to go to church, stranger here as he is, to be stared at. It is not every one that does make it a rule to ‘go poking’ to church! . . . ugh, ugh, ugh!” . . . (Another fit of coughing.) “I don’t know (ugh, ugh!) whether (ugh!) I did not catch this vile cold in ‘draggle-tailing’ last Sunday through the wet to church after you. . . . Ugh, ugh, ugh, ugh!” But here all further colloquy was drowned in the fit of coughing that ensued in an exasperated degree; while the somewhat indignant fair one replied, with a laudable impatience—

“I shall really never hear the last of that cold!” but perceiving that her words were lost on Mr. Howbiggen, she reverted to her own cause of dissatisfaction. “Most contradictory and tantalizing—Colonel Renmore not being present. . . . Well, at any rate, we shall have the pleasure of seeing him to-day.” So saying, she consoled herself for her disappointment, and now made her way to meet her various friends who thronged together—the service being now over—in their transit from the church, to hold, according to custom, (as, reader, you may see in any village church-

yard on a Sunday,) a few minutes' conversation, ere dispersing to their different abodes.

Mr. Howbiggen hobbled after her, ejaculating with what breath he could muster, after the discipline of his coughing, "It is the root of all bodily evils, a cold, I do believe. So much fever always connected with it. . . . That blockhead Esdaile was for once in his life right when he said so."—Just at this moment, and as this kind reminiscence of the worthy Doctor had hardly escaped his lips, up came the little man himself, greeting his patient in his usual lively style, to the invariable disarrangement of that cynical gentleman's bilious temperament.

"Ha! cold better to-day, I hope, Mr. Howbiggen?—and how do you do, Miss Howbiggen? Beautiful sermon we have had to-day. Delightful preacher Mr. Fenton."

To all these remarks and inquiries the fair one and her brother both replied at once. The words of the dyspeptic patient being, "Ugh, not a bit better! How should a man's cold be better, hazarding his health in coming to a damp church?" So grumbled Mr. Howbiggen; while the smiling Doctor's attention was more occupied in listening to the gentler greeting of his amiable sister.

"Oh yes! Mr. Howbiggen's cold is much better! . . . the sermon was delightful! . . . but . . .

but . . .” (glad to arrive at the topic uppermost in her mind), “I thought I should have seen Colonel Renmore at church to-day.”

“Colonel Renmore !” exclaimed Esdaile. “Dear me ! your mentioning his name reminds me of my sad neglect in not having, ere now, paid my respects to him as I promised. . . .”

[“Lucky fellow, the Colonel,” growled out Howbiggen to himself, “to be spared the annoyance !”]

“Indeed !” interposed Miss Howbiggen ; while the Doctor continued—

“I have not actually been to see him since our little fishing ramble together—nearly a fortnight ago now—when I walked up to call on you. In fact, I have been so much engaged in going the round of my various patients in the neighbourhood of Keswick, that I have been unable to do so. I have an excellent opportunity, however, of calling now, so I will march forward to the Traveller’s Rest, and beat up the Colonel’s quarters ; and, by-the-bye, he was good enough to offer me a ‘frank’ whenever I required one,—I will ask that favour of him to-day. But you have assuredly met him ere this?”

“No, indeed ! not until this morning have his engagements permitted him to promise us the pleasure of his company.”

“Oh ! then, I shall see him to-day at your house.

I am delighted at that ! You will find him a most agreeable person indeed ! But I am surprised you have not met him sooner."

"No; on consideration," replied Miss Howbiggen, "I can now very easily understand that whilst his movements were uncertain, he thought it more convenient to decline coming out, than to have to write an excuse subsequently on finding he could not come, or accept the invitation conditionally."

"Well, that is very reasonable of you," observed Mr. Howbiggen; "vastly reasonable !—and you are willing to make this excuse now you fancy he is coming !—had he still, however, declined your advances, he would have been still a subject of idle speculation, and you as unreasonably fidgety as ever. . . . Well, I only hope, Hetty, now you have teased him into coming to dine——"

. . . " ' Drawn him out,' " if you please, into the circle, so happy to shew him due attention— ' teased' him, indeed !"

So said Miss Howbiggen; meantime her brother, taking no notice of her reproof, continued, . . . "I only hope (I beg to say) that when you have made his acquaintance, you will not have reason to repent it."

"Repent it !" exclaimed Dr. Esdaile and Miss Howbiggen both at once; the one in serious pet-

tishness; the other, in his usual tone of good-humoured raillery; for Esdaile was never more pleased with his eccentric patient than when he was in his peculiarly morose and ursine moods. "Why, you speak," continued "Hetty," (for so was Miss Hester Howbiggen familiarly called) "as if we were about to meet a swindler or felon! Ridiculous!"

"Pish! I don't mean to say the man is either the one or the other, though there is never being certain. All I would suggest is, that I never knew any good come of being so 'mighty' anxious to see and know people! (ugh, ugh!) We always get disappointed in our expectations, and deceived in our hopes."

"Ay; but you will not be so in the Colonel, I can assure you," said Esdaile;—"the most agreeable, delightful companion I ever fell in with."

"To be sure! to be sure!" exclaimed Hetty; "for shame, brother!—this morose way of viewing men and things——"

. . . "Is what men and things too often deserve. It is everlastingly the case," continued the ascetic, in a hasty tone, "that our liking or respect for people very little improves on our further acquaintance with them! (ugh, ugh!)"

"Oh, there is no fear of this in the instance of my friend, Colonel Renmore,—so good morning,

until I have the pleasure of meeting you again at dinner." And so saying, Dr. Esdaile, after having made a brief delay to pay his respects to the curate of Lorton, proceeded on his visit to our hero. The good pastor was now advancing from the church porch, surrounded by all the gentry of the congregation (amongst whom were Mr. Lawton with his fair daughter Laura) in conversation with him. They were all happy to take this opportunity of paying their respects to him, and expressing the gratification they had derived from his advocacy, feeling and eloquent as it had been, of the benevolent cause of the local charity.

The group was joined now by our friends Miss Hester Howbiggen and her brother ; nor was the latter remiss (however ursine and repelling he generally was) in shewing that he, too, was sensible of the merits and claim to respect of one so universally beloved.

" You will favour us with your company, I trust, Mr. Fenton, at dinner to-day—ugh ? eh ?" growled out the cynic, as amiably as he could ; while he continued, " to make amends for my causticity, you will have the more amiable society of all the gentlemen round you," looking at Golefield, Routhmore, and Lawton ; and making also as polite an inclination of the head as he could to Miss Lawton, who leaned on her father's arm.

“Yes ; and of Colonel Renmore too,” added Miss Hetty. “I trust you will come ;” and here Miss Howbiggen proceeded to hold some minor conversation with Laura Lawton. Meantime, Fenton replied—

“Indeed, I should be too happy to have the honour ; but being obliged to return to Lorton to do duty this evening, I fear I must decline the pleasure of meeting so many (I may say) of my best friends.” So said he, as he answered back the smile of good will and esteem with which Golefield in particular greeted him.

“Well, then, you must positively come up to the house and sit with us a few minutes,” said Miss Howbiggen, with her usual “fidget” (to use her brother’s ill-behaved language) of hospitality. And so, too, would he have expressed himself now, but that he seemed to make an exception to his usual unceremonious mode of carping in the instance of the good curate. Nay, what is more, he fell back in the ranks, while his sister and Fenton walked onward foremost of the party, as he muttered to himself, “Why, there is a man that it really does one good to see. He never smiles in your face to answer some selfish purpose—to cloak some design to fawn and stab ! to flatter, cajole, and cheat ! He is a good man,—a sincere man ;—and what is his reward ? Neglect, and the postpone-

ment of his merits, according to the universal and hateful law that prevails throughout society ! What encouragement is there to be good, and diligent, and conscientious, when the return these qualities meet with is mere forgetfulness on the part of the world, and neglect ?” So saying, or rather ruminating, Mr. Howbiggen hobbled up to the party in advance, whom he now found, *unâ voce*, remarking on the appearance of the venerable stranger who had attended the church that morning. They looked round for him amongst the group of persons leaving the church ; but it should seem that he had already withdrawn himself, unperceived by the congregation, while yet the benediction was being pronounced at the close of the service, and before any movement had as yet been made to rise and quit the sacred edifice. In effecting this withdrawal of himself unperceived, he was aided by the proximity of the pew he occupied to the church door. The curiosity therefore that his presence had excited was doomed to be ungratified ; and of course, in proportion as information concerning himself and his movements was scant, the conjectures that puzzled over them were manifold.

CHAPTER XVIII.

“No soul on earth must know it: not my father.
O, comrade, tell me? Is all changed around me,
Or is it only I? I find myself
As among strangers. Not a trace is left
Of all my former wishes.
And in the church was I; and now at once
Was my devotion cloudless as my love.”

COLERIDGE.

A LITTLE shallop “glode” (as the old ballads have it) silently along under the boughs that shaded the bank of the meer, and as they stretched over its clear liquid crystals, tinted them in the green hues of their reflected verdure, in beautiful variation, of the azure lustre in which the rest of the waters shone beneath those smiling heavens. After proceeding along the whole extent of the bank, the shallop was moored in a rude cove, formed by a hollow of the rock, and the persons it had conveyed now pursued their way by a flight of natural steps,

formed by the jagged sides of the crag, till they found themselves on the summit of the steep.

“I have seen him, then !—I have at last seen him !” said one of the persons to the other. “The dim visions of years far retraced float faintly before me, and represent the form—the aspect—the benign smile—the countenance of love, of compassion, and gentle persuasion ! . . . Sorrow had not then shaded that brow ! nor regrets embittered the pure stream of those cheerful as virtuous thoughts ! . . .”

And the speaker was silent, as overcome with the emotion occasioned by reflections, perhaps the bitterest of which our nature can be sensible — namely, those that reproach us with having wronged the persons most worthy our love !—those that whisper in the ear of our anguish that where kindness has met us, we have slighted it, and turned away ; or, yet more, repulsed it, heedless of the wound our ill-return has inflicted ! Such is the wound a parent, for example, is wrung withal, in the callous indifference, or thoughtless waywardness, or yet worse, the stubborn opposition, of a cherished and darling child ! Such is the wound, too, a friend is doomed to feel, when misunderstood by false pride, when misconstrued by suspicious meanness, or chilled by the yet less scrupulous outrage of barefaced ingratitude !

“ Well, well,” replied the other, filling up the pause occasioned by the emotion of his companion, “ it is a long day to look back upon. The judgment of the offender was scarcely ripe then ; and . . . ”

. . . “ Were it twice as long ago, the sense of committed wrong would yet be as keenly edged in my heart as now ! I was loath to look upon his face again—I feared to view the very benignity that would be my bitterest accnsation ! Though I have faced dangers and braved the frowns no less of man than of fortune, I never shrank so sensibly as I did before that benevolent and revered aspect. Its kindness was a condemnation and a reproach severer to me than the combined frowns of a whole hostile world. I think it would break my heart to face it again.”

And the person speaking thus relapsed into his former silence, though the mental struggle battled keenly within his breast ; he seemed to proceed mechanically, as it were, by the side of his companion, scarcely knowing whither he was led, while the other again attempted to offer the rude but bootless consolation which a kind heart and plain, untutored mind characteristically proffer.

“ Well now ; where is the good of a man’s ‘ taking on so,’ when not all the fretting in the world over past faults or follies can mend matters ?

If in a former day of youthful or childish heedlessness, rashness, or blind waywardness, we could possibly have foreseen the day when they should occasion so much regret to us, think you we should have been either heedless, rash, or wayward? . . . No, no; but we can't look forward! We are pulled this way and that by certain invisible agencies that play with us, look you, and twist and turn us just as they please—just as I may turn aside the track of this poor beetle you are about to step upon,”—and so saying, the person, in an affectionate, though rude manner, laid his hand on the arm of his comrade and pressed it, while he added, as he pushed away the beetle from the path, “There; and may the better destinies overhead so turn aside all the evils that cross our mortal path!”

“Amen, my good friend!” replied the other, with a solemnity little softened by hope, as he added, “But really fortune (or rather fate, as you would say) has shewn me so little favour that I fear your good wishes are but uttered in vain.”

And here, being interrupted by the footsteps of some one pushing his way briskly through the tangled brushwood and thick dank sedge that fringed the bank of the water along which they were proceeding, they struck suddenly into a narrow path that wound round the crag, and so

avoided all contact with the person who now came up to the spot they had vacated.

“ Well! I could have declared, as I stood on the crag-top yonder, in my way towards the meer, that I saw a boat land two persons somewhere near this spot; one of which I could declare was old Mike, and the other bore a marvellous resemblance to that singular person we saw at church to-day—that venerable stranger about whom every one was asking. Well; it is odd! I was almost sure they passed up the cliff-side, as if to proceed in this direction.” And here he looked about him again. “ No; I can perceive no traces of them whatever;—very odd, indeed!”

The person speaking thus was of short stature and stoutly built, though active; and being rendered somewhat out of breath by the ramble he had taken, was glad to sit down on the bank and rest himself for a short period. It is scarcely necessary to say that it is the worthy little Doctor that is now before us, and whom we have here joined on his progress to call on “the Colonel,” which we remember his sallying forward upon subsequently to the church-service, at the close of our preceding chapter. He sat, with his four-legged Achates Bryan by his side, looking on the glowing lake-tide, tacitly wishing, perhaps, despite its being the Sabbath, that he had his fly-rod in his hand.

Nor trifling, indeed, was the temptation that suggested that wish ; for beneath the spot where he sate the water was deep, and what was called by anglers a “hole;” and here the finest and largest char ever delighted to disport them through its translucent mazes. He could have sate for ever, enjoying the shade of the boughs above his head, the cool “salute” of the gale that freshened from the water over his brow, the charm of the seclusion those haunts afforded,—and, yet more than all, the sight of his favourite finny game darting through the pure lucid tide below ;—but this paradise of repose was not to last for ever ; and after sufficiently indulging in it, he called to mind that he had no business to delay where he was any longer. “I set out,” he said to himself, as he rose from the bank, “to call on Colonel Renmore, but was led aside from my intended path by the sudden deserial of those two people in the shallop, that have so unaccountably escaped my overtaking them ! . . . Well, no matter ; in rambling after them I have lighted on a famous spot for the char, to find which I would have willingly consented to ramble twice as far out of my way.” And thus consoling himself, the philosophic as merry doctor or angler, or both, proceeded on his original commission of paying his respects to “the Colonel.” Away, then, he hied him, followed by Bryan, to dame

Wetherby's. "Is Colonel Renmore at home?" he inquired of that worthy and demure person herself, the moment he entered the porch.

"I believe he is, Sir," was the reply; "I rather think he has just come in. I think he went to church this morning," continued the landlady, as she preceded the Doctor on her way to knock at our hero's door.

"No, no; the Colonel was not at church—but your lovely daughter was! And never did I see her looking more charming than in that pretty gipsy hat she had on. She eclipsed all her blooming maiden fellows, whose Sunday gear seemed to sit awkwardly upon them in comparison with hers. Ay, and you, too, Mrs. Wetherby, would be at church every Sunday of your life were you to hear such a discourse as Mr. Fenton gave us this morning!"

The good-humoured, plain-spoken Doctor was not too remarkable on all occasions for the "tact" with which he spoke; and so the widow Wetherby seemed to consider on the present occasion, as her countenance deepened in its shade of demureness at the kind of indirect reflection which his words seemed to convey on her attendance at the dissenting preacher's harangues, rather than the more chaste and sober discourses of the village church. On one account, too, more particularly than any

other, was the Doctor's remark injudicious, since it had the effect of arraying the feelings of the parent against those of her daughter on the delicate topic of their respective devotional notions; and Mrs. Wetherby had screwed up her lips as a prelude to a rather lengthened reply, when, fortunately for the Doctor, she was now close at the Colonel's door.

"I scarcely know," she said, "what some people may think,—but it appears to my consideration, that young persons should be guided rather by the recommendation of those who are better able to judge for them than themselves. . . ."

("Oh, yes! decidedly—decidedly! . . . Is *this* the Colonel's door?")

. . . "Especially—ahem—in the instance of children as with reference to their parents——"

. . . "Certainly—certainly! no doubt!" continued the Doctor, recklessly. "Oh! I wish you had been one of the congregation to-day, Mrs. Wetherby, knowing how you delight in a fine, impressive discourse. You would have been charmed as much as myself, or as your daughter, I dare say, was. . . . But Gertrude, (I beg pardon,) Miss Wetherby, will give you a full account of it, no doubt, at tea this evening." . . .

But the sage landlady and proselyte of the oracular Quandish was too much overset by this

second battery on her nerves, or prejudices, or both, to have been able to reply with perfect calmness to it, and was no less glad to break off a parley in which the Doctor spoke with so little regard to consideration or nicety, as respected her "peculiar sentiments" and feelings. Accordingly, having ushered him into Colonel Renmore's room, she departed, expressing to herself with less moderation than so rigid a "chapel votary" should have observed, as regarded Esdaile's imprudent mention of her daughter—

"This is the way that girl is everlastingly rendering me subject to the reflections of people, in consequence of her wilfully taking an opposite path to that which it should be her duty to pursue together with myself! 'A wayward son,' (as the Proverbs say,)" she added, in a truly sanctimonious twang, and à la Quandish, "is the reproach of his mother!" and *I* may say a 'wayward daughter'! . . . But we will see how long this is to last!"

With these words, she betook her with new zeal to prepare for her evening's visit to the fane of her favourite holder-forth; consoling herself, as it were, for the "twitting" she had been sensible of, on the part of the thoughtless Doctor, by precisely acting in the teeth and in defiance of his gratuitous recommendations, and evincing herself, yet more and more, a "stanch meetinger."

Meantime, the greetings due on either side had taken place between the Doctor and his distinguished friend; with many apologies on the part of the former for his apparent neglect in not having fulfilled his promise of "looking in" upon the Colonel at an earlier period than the present day. Nor was the request for a frank forgotten, which while Renmore was, with his usual acquiescence, engaged in affording, Esdaile "talked on."

"A charming party, I trust, we shall have to-day at the Howbiggens'. Our host is a strange character, less really unamiable than he chooses to exhibit himself. His grumbling is, I fancy, all so much vanity!—mere indulgence of vanity, and nothing more."

"Ay, indeed! how so?" inquired Renmore, as he raised his head up from looking at the "frank" he was inditing.

"Why, having been disappointed in the career of early ambition, and feeling his talents were thrown away, and himself laid on the shelf as it were, he is determined to be a 'character,' and claim the social immunities of a 'privileged person.'"

"A proof of sad weakness of character, in my opinion," observed Renmore, as he rose and presented the frank to Esdaile; "and entirely, as you observe, the result of vanity, and a morbid desire

to claim attention. No doubt, disappointment is vexatious and trying, but it is the test of a manly mind to be able to evince endurance. This will render a man much more worthy of admiration for character, than any ill-judged disregard for the usances, feelings, or even prejudices of society, which it would render the slave of its own spleen."

"A noble piece of moral philosophy; and Routhmore himself could not have uttered a finer! . . . Oh! you will be much gratified with some of the persons you will meet this evening."

"Indeed, it is a matter of regret" (and here he spoke sincerely) "that I was unable to avail myself of your kind offers of introduction previously; but I trust that this evening will make me amends for my disappointment hitherto."

And here an interval of interruption in the conversation took place, which was occupied by our hero and Esdaile respectively withdrawing to dress for dinner; when on their meeting again, they strolled along the margin of the lake towards Mr. Howbiggen's residence, as their conversation was thus resumed—

"An only daughter, I think you said the other day," (observed Renmore,) "Miss Lawton was?"

"An only daughter, and a charming, amiable girl, too! and I really don't know, were I what is termed a 'marrying man,' whether I

should not feel somewhat inclined to make a proposal !”

“ Nay, you had better resolve at once on being a ‘marrying man,’ and propose the question ;—especially when there are so many inducements,—loveliness, amiability, and that most splendid of female attractions,” (he added, repeating the observation he had heretofore made to Gertrude,) “as the world considers it—fortune !”

The little Doctor smiled, and shook his head, with an indecision that possibly spoke, not only that he had scarcely made up his mind on such a measure, but—which would be a more serious obstacle—that he was not perhaps to the lady’s taste. Whether, however, the secret of his indecision was, that “he would not if he could,” or, “he could not if he would,” we are unable to pronounce ; though we should say that both considerations mingled in the thoughts that passed across his mind.

“ Well ; but Mr. Lawton, her father, what sort of a person is he ?” inquired Renmore.

“ A very good sort of person ; but unfortunately possessed with a most mistaken notion of his own superior sagacity and talent.”

“ Indeed !” observed Renmore, smiling ; “ and in what in particular is it his ambition to shine ?”

“ Oh ! his pride is that of being a projector of

happy improvements,—his hobby is endless experiment; which he dignifies by the name of science, or scientific improvements.”

“Only his zeal or fancy a little outruns his judgment;—is it so?”

“Precisely!”

“I presume his experiment (or ‘experimentalizing,’ if you please) is at his own expense!” observed Renmore, laughing.

“Indeed it is; and no failure in any way lowers the worthy as indefatigable lord of Blacktarn in his own esteem! There is always some happy excuse at hand to hush any whisperings of mortified self-love. His equanimity under his self-inflicted trials is ever unshaken; and to hear him inform you of his absurdities and blunders with a perfect self-satisfaction that all failure is to be attributable to extraneous and unforeseen accidents, rather than to any radical defect in his plans, is really delightful—a rich treat!” And here the little Doctor gave scope to his merriment in an unrestrained fit of laughter at his worthy friend Lawton’s expense. The contagion of risibility was irresistible, and Renmore joined in it as he portrayed to himself the interesting individual whose characteristics Esdaile had placed before him; not perhaps without considerations of the probable chance of being able to turn this “ingenious” gentleman’s credu-

lity, conceit, and good nature, to his own private account. These deeper considerations were, however, well veiled beneath the mask of that merriment in which he joined with the Doctor, who proceeded to amuse his companion with sundry anecdotes of the sagacity of the good "Squire of Blacktarn's" improving projects, with which possibly the reader may be yet more amused when, in proper time and place, he shall hear them described, and with all good faith in their expediency, by the worthy projector himself.

"And to heighten this provokingly amusing 'self-satisfiedness' as to his various conceits," continued Esdaile, "the oracular style of his delivery and mock pomp, or rather 'pomposity' of manner, is as transcendent as it is original!" And here another peal of laughter broke irrepressibly from the facetious Doctor, the echoes of which might very easily have made themselves audible within the walls of Mr. Howbiggen's house, at which Renmore and his companion had now nearly arrived, being by this time more than half-way up the drive or gravel-road that led to it. In order, therefore, that we may be with the inmates to receive their various distinguished guests, and our hero in particular, we will transport ourselves and the reader to Miss Howbiggen's drawing-room, in advance of the party.

CHAPTER XIX.

“ You are not here ! the quaint witch Fancy sees
In vacant chairs your absent images,
And points where you should be, but are not.”

SHELLEY.

THE drawing-room window of Howbiggen House commanded a most convenient view of the drive up to it ; convenient, that is, for those who, like Miss Hetty Howbiggen, were fond of seeing “ what was going on.” No Flemish lady, with her “ side mirrors ” at each sash, was ever more readily informed of the “ who ” and the “ what ” were moving in front of the house than Miss Howbiggen ;—of course she did not fail to discern Esdaile and his companion as they advanced to the door.

“ Oh ! here he must be at last !—most distinguished looking, graceful person ! ”

“ Who is here at last ?—distinguished ?—graceful ?—umph !—What nonsense is this ? One would fancy the ‘ Apollo ’ Belvidere had descended from his pedestal, and walked up to pay a visit ! ”

“Nay, Mr. Howbiggen, it is a figure somewhat more acceptable, I trust, than a statue! It is, or I very much mistake, Colonel Ren——”

“Oh, good heavens! that endless Colonel! He will be here quite time enough; we shall have quite enough of him when he comes, without all this anticipatory prating.—And after all, who knows? he may be merely some adventurer.” . . .

. . . “For shame! Mr. Howbiggen . . . do have a little respect for propriety . . .” said his estimable sister, quite shocked at the freedom no less than moroseness of his remarks, which she did her best to cut short, or they would in all probability have been overheard by her “distinguished guest,” (a term, by-the-bye, of which her brother declared himself positively sick,) who now entered the room ushered in by Esdaile, after the trumpet of their important announcement had been sounded by the servant.

“I have the honour, at length, of presenting Colonel Renmore to you, Miss Howbiggen,” said Doctor Esdaile, as that lady acknowledged the Colonel’s bow with a most distinguished curtsy, as she expressed how happy she was at his presence,—meantime she “devoured” him with her eyes. Tall, graceful figure; elevated forehead; complexion, rather pale; hair, deep brown; eye-brows, arched; countenance at once pleasing and thoughtful; contour of the face, oval,—such was the portrait

Miss Hetty scanned with a glance swift as thought, nor, it may be added, with dissatisfaction. Her brother, on his part, "bobbed down" his head, not too gracefully, but still with certain symptoms of more deference to the "social charities" than was usual with him. In fact, if a "prepossessing appearance," according to the Macassar oil advertisements, is a "universal recommendation," we may certainly say it had its effect in the present instance; and old Howbiggen tacitly acknowledged that the "variety" introduced in the ordinary social circle of country squire-archy was something like a relief, to say nothing of the contrast afforded by the easy cheerfulness and urbanity of our hero to the more boisterous spirits and noisy good-humour of the little Doctor.

"Much flattered at seeing you, Colonel,—umh! umh!—You find the neighbourhood dull, I take it!" growled out Howbiggen; "I know I do!—ugh."

"Indeed, if it could possibly have proved so," replied Renmore, "it is to myself alone that it is attributable, in not having availed myself of your kindness and hospitality sooner. But, the fact is, I have been obliged to exercise a good-deal of self-denial." . . .

("Self-denial!" exclaimed Miss Howbiggen to herself . . . "what a charming as well as modest turn is given in that term to his declining our advances towards his acquaintance! Others would have

blundered out apologies, and said many awkwardly civil things to little purpose !—charming !)” . . .

So thought Miss Howbiggen; while our hero continued, “But really the arrear of correspondence on public business, especially concerning a bill I shall have the honour of introducing to the house next session——”

“Entirely engrossed your attention, Colonel, no doubt !” interposed the Doctor, most conveniently winding up Renmore’s apology, and sounding a chorus of conviction as it were, as to its justice, which he further wound up by saying, “Most meritorious !—self-denial !—most meritorious !”

. . . “Yes, yes ! I know, too, from past recollections, what public business is ; and what a plague anything like an extended correspondence is,” said Mr. Howbiggen, who now being led upon the train of his pristine disappointments, (as recorded on our first introduction to him,) gave the alarm, by sundry preludial growls, of entering on one of his usual “jeremiads.” This result, however, was anticipated and prevented by the timely interference of Esdaile, who proceeded, with his usual good-humoured railleury, to call away his sour patient from a sense of his annoyances, (at the expense even of a little exasperating him sometimes in another way,) while an opportunity was now afforded to our hero of “rendering himself agree-

able" to his fair hostess in the conversation that more freely ensued between them. Miss Howbiggen, in her way, was scarcely less a tactician than "her distinguished guest;" and being imbued with all laudable curiosity, (of which we have already witnessed specimens,) she shaped her remarks, no doubt, to the "grand end" of learning as much of the Colonel, as regarded himself, his circumstances, tastes, &c., as she could.

"You find our scenery very inferior to that of Scotland?" was her observation.

"Why, indeed," replied Renmore, deferentially, "there are parts of the scenery here as fine and as sternly grand, I think, as even in Scotland."

"You reside chiefly in that country, I think?"

"Yes; what little property I have is chiefly situate there."

"In the county of Caithness?" Renmore bowed assent; while Miss Howbiggen continued—"But then we must make allowance for a little partiality. For even were the Scotch scenery less sublime and sternly grand (which it is not) than that of our English mountain-country, yet it would appear in the eyes of a Scotchman to possess greater interest."

"Yes, I partake," replied Renmore, smiling, "of the *maladie du pays*, and believe I feel as warmly the love of country as any Highland Clansman

even could feel. But things are never in my opinion fairly viewed by comparison; each object should be adjudged according to its own respective merits."

"Very true—very accurate discrimination."

"For instance," continued Renmore, "were I to look at Borrodaile or Skiddaw, and . . ."

But here Miss Howbiggen being called on to rise to receive that estimable person Mr. Lawton, the conversation was for the present broken off. The lord of Blacktarn advanced, accompanied by his daughter, an interesting and pleasing-looking girl. She was simply attired, and her traits were rather piquant in expression, and her cheek delicately pale. She curtseyed to Colonel Renmore in the ceremony of introduction, and took her seat by Miss Howbiggen, while the "improvement-loving" squire addressed himself with a not unamusingly pompous air of urbanity to our hero.

"Delighted to see you, Colonel Renmore—ahem!—delighted!" he said, making a splendidly formal "salam," as we may call it, rather than bow. "You have long been looked for by us all; and I much regret that our poor abode at Blacktarn has not yet been honoured by your company—ahem!"

Renmore here excused himself as we have already described, and turned the conversation into another channel, expressive of the great gratification the scenery of the spot had afforded him.

“Ay, Colonel, no doubt ! *latebræ dulces* ! ‘mountain and meer,—ahem—are very well ! very fine indeed ! but I think when I have had the pleasure of shewing you another feature of the country in this neighbourhood, you will derive scarcely less gratification.”

“I shall be most delighted ! I presume you speak with reference to the agricultural feature.”

“Precisely ! . . . ay, I flatter myself,” he continued, with a smile of complacency, “you will be a little surprised to witness how far perseverance and ingenuity, backed, of course, by capital——”

. . . “Of course, of course ;”—and here our hero looked as deferentially solemn as Mr. Lawton’s style of importance at the mention of “capital” seemed to demand.

“Ya-as ; you will see what our efforts towards improving the soil have been able to effect. Barren and untractable as it had been pronounced, you will be surprised to learn that——”

“Oh, good heavens ! there is Lawton boring the Colonel with his catalogue of improvements and wiseacre projects !” ejaculated Mr. Howbiggen to Esdaile ; while he continued, turning round to Miss Howbiggen—“Well, how much longer are we to wait until dinner is announced ?”

“We are only waiting until Mr. Golefield and Mr. Routhmore arrive. I wonder they are not here by this time !”

“No wonder at all!” growled the “crusty gentleman;” “that moving mystery Golefield has only to take some crotchet of a dream into his head, and he will go on ‘aeronauting’ on the wings of fancy far beyond all recollection of anything so ‘material’ or sublunary as a dinner-party!”

“But he has Mr. Routhmore with him to bring him back, and keep a rein on him!” observed Miss Howbiggen, with a smile.

“Bring him back to dinner, too, I trust,—mean-time, he must detain us no longer,” replied Mr. Howbiggen. “Why, bless me, Dr. Esdaile, he would not forego one of his rainbow-coloured fancy dreams for an epicurean repast of your char even!”

“I fear not,” said the Doctor, with ludicrous ruefulness. “But then you must remember he is one of our ‘Genii of the Lake,’ and not like the rest of us.”

Accordingly, there was a move towards the dinner room, our hero landing in Miss Howbiggen, of course, as matter of etiquette; though it must not be disguised that from what little he had seen of Laura Lawton, he would have preferred offering his arm to her, and securing a seat by her side, as a companion more suited perhaps to his taste.

As for “those Genii of the Lake,” Messrs. Golefield and Routhmore, they had accompanied

Fenton part of the way back on his return to his cure at Lorton, to which spot we remember he expressed that he was obliged to proceed, when he declined Miss Howbiggen's invitation to remain and dine. He had therefore taken his leave of that lady after having sate down and conversed for some little time. Routhmore, himself, and Golefield had entered into an interesting discussion relative to the comparative merits of schools supported by national and compulsory, or voluntary contributions—Golefield arguing for the latter, and Routhmore for the former. Golefield, as usual, appealing to the feelings and the spirit of charity; Routhmore, to incitements a little less optional. This topic had its rise, of course, in the subject of the charitable institution which Fenton had that day advocated at church; and so much interested were his two lay friends in the discussion, that they could not let him take his departure alone, but rambled on with him a part of the way to Lorton. Hence they have been found a little behind hand with Miss Howbiggen's half hour bell, and dinner bell too, though the portentous echoes of either might have been heard far sounding over the meer. Trusting, therefore, that they may yet find their way back to decorate the Howbiggen festivities ere they reach their close, we shall return to the dinner-table, and place ourselves with our hero

between his fair hostess and the yet fairer and more youthful Laura Lawton.

Insensibly our hero appeared to be giving up a little larger portion of his attention or remarks to the latter, at which Miss Howbiggen could not feel otherwise than rather fidgety, according to her usual characteristic, and consequently was not sorry to reclaim him to herself; with which view she recurred to the topic of conversation between herself and Renmore which had been broken off on the announcement of the Lawtons.

“You were speaking of the relative beauties of the Scotch and English mountain scenery, Colonel Renmore? I forget precisely what it was you were going to say.”

“I was merely remarking, that when asked ‘which I liked best of the two,’ the most reasonable answer would be, that I admired the characteristics of each, where both have so much to demand attention. If I were, for instance, to despise the Borrodaile ridge or Skiddaw, as being less sternly grand than Ben-Nevis or Cairngorm, I blind myself to a just view, not only of the mountains, but the question—”

(“How pointed, terse, and clever!” thought Miss Howbiggen—“the mountains and the question!”)

——“And, consequently, lose much pleasure

through short-sightedness and prejudice, which would be otherwise amply afforded me in a due appreciation of the beauties which, in the more varied tints of mosses and foliage, are possessed in a superior degree by the English mountains. ‘Do you not consider so, Miss Lawton?’”

“Indeed, I am glad to see that there is something to be said for our lakes and hills, notwithstanding so many persons profess to disregard them as viewed in comparison with those of Scotland,” replied Miss Lawton;—“the comparison is no doubt the error; and is, generally speaking, but a delusive standard to judge by.”

“Precisely,” interposed Esdaile; with whom all that Miss Lawton remarked appeared to have its due weight and interest. “For instance, they told me when I went to fish in Ullswater, that the char were large,—so they were in comparison with those in many inferior streams, but taken by themselves were poor, small things.”

“Ugh!” observed old Howbiggen; “so it is in everything! A man will endeavour to undersell another, for instance, by telling you you shall have his trumpery cheaper than anywhere else!—ugh,—after all, this does not prove his trumpery cheap, but the trumpery elsewhere extravagantly dear!”

“Good! good! exclaimed Mr. Lawton, pro-

nouncing the “fiat” of his approval in his usual oracular way at this characteristic illustration, which excited a smile in the circle; while Renmore proceeded, in reply to a remark from Miss Howbiggen relative to Swiss scenery, to extend his observations to this region also for her peculiar satisfaction—

“I still speak on the same principle I observed before,” he continued; “for, of course, both the mountains here and in Scotland would dwindle into nothing if we immediately recur to the Alps in comparison with them. But this again is unjust. In their way, these minor mountains have beauties with which alone, and as taken by themselves, we should be satisfied, without depreciating them, and spoiling our own pleasure, by comparisons which are out of place, and therefore idle.”

“What admirable discrimination!” thought Miss Howbiggen; “and what a superior, unprejudiced person the Colonel is! He has seen all the world, no doubt, and yet. . . no airs of disregarding his own country!”

In this sentiment she was fully met by Laura Lawton, as they interchanged glances, or “telegraphed” each other, as it may be termed, with looks that bespoke their perfect concurrence in admiring our hero’s good taste, no less than discrimination.

“Hah! well said!—justly said!” observed the oracular Lawton. “Colonel Renmore, let me have the honour of drinking a glass of champagne with you.”

This amicable ceremony being over, the oracular lord of Blacktarn (who would put the reader, could he see him, uncommonly in mind of a certain late pompous M.P., celebrated for his *cuisine*) honoured our hero with addressing his remarks peculiarly to him, in token, no doubt, of his high sense of “the Colonel’s” justness of views and nicety of discrimination.

. . . “Ya-as,” he continued; “and I trust, Colonel, that when you quit our mountain region you will say, as I was about to observe to you before dinner, that the spirit of improvement and scientific experiment in agricultural enterprise have done much to render it fruitful in richer objects than ‘lichens’ and hare bells!”

“Indeed! I am happy to understand this. There is nothing that interests me more than the progress of those efforts by which barren tracts are reclaimed, and the stubborn wild rendered a field of fruitfulness and plenty.”

“I am delighted to hear you say so,” replied the “experimental philosopher;” “for, do you know, that such is the bad taste of most persons to whom I have expressed myself on this important topic, that they have coldly replied (ahem!) that they cared

little about the improvement, in an agricultural point of view, of a region whose chief interest rested in its wildness, and a freedom from all reclaim to what they called—tameness !”

“ It evinces a vitiated taste,” replied Renmore, smiling, “ to shut out any object so laudable as that which you appear to contemplate. Both features of country may be surely enjoyed without any interference with the one by the other. For my part, I should be happy to see any barren niggard tract smiling with cultivation and wealth; but whilst I admire this, I may also admire, for different recommendations, the wilderness and savage beauty of lake and mountain, tarn and woodland height.”

“ Admirably said !” exclaimed Mr. Lawton, in triumph; while, however, the malicious little Doctor proceeded to place a drag-chain as it were on the earnestness of his exultation, by saying in a gentle voice, in which the satirical propensity was quietly apparent—

“ Stay, stay, my good Mr. Lawton. You should mention to Colonel Renmore, too, why the persons you mention spoke with regret as they did; and surely they had reason, if the wild beauties of the scenery under consideration were thus reduced to tameness ?”

“ How? why? let us hear, pray !” asked Lawton.

“ Because you ‘improved away’ all its beauties ! Why, you actually, in your zeal for improvement, exercised it in ploughing up the whole side of a charming slope that had been remarkable for its lichens and drooping woods.” And here a universal laugh arose at the expense of the worthy improver, who good-humouredly joined in it, while Esdaile proceeded in his raillery—“ Hang it ! you would rather see turnips sprouting than wild fern and moss, where the last are a necessary constituent in our scenery. Away, say I, with such agricultural tartars that would lay waste all the real beauties of the region ! Two or three such ‘experimental philosophers’ as yourself would ‘improve’ the place into a mere dull scope of drains and ditches, fallow and grass-land ; and instead of the ‘picturesque,’ would exhibit farm stock,—instead of Dryads and Fauns peopling the slope and woodland dell, we should have nothing but clod-hoppers, ploughboys, and agricultural gentlemen like yourself, stumping about the glebe in York-tan gaiters and galoshes ! What do you say, Miss Lawton ? Has not your prospect been spoiled for anything like a sketch ?”

Laura smiled, while her sire replied—

“ Rally away as you please, Doctor ;” at the same time joining good-humouredly in the chorus of merriment which Esdaile’s banter had again

raised ; “ but I flatter myself,” he added, in a more serious tone, the self-complacency of which provoked a smile on the lip of Renmore, to whom he addressed himself—“ I flatter myself I have done some little good in this part of the country.—‘ Capital !’ ahem ! as I said before—Capital and Enterprise, Colonel Renmore !—what will they not effect in combination ?—ahem !”

“ Certainly ; when properly directed,” observed Renmore, politely. “ It is always gratifying (and he spoke sincerely, though with a different reference than Mr. Lawton imagined) to witness enterprise backed by capital.”

“ Ay,” interposed Esdaile, in his humorous style ; “ and it is capital to witness a beautiful piece of water backed by a wooded slope. But Mr. Lawton, in his zeal of enterprise, must needs be longing to fell the wood ; which was anything but capital. Oh, sin and sacrilege ! I wish I could laugh you out, my dear friend, of this mania you have for so strangely ‘ improving ’ every charming spot I used to delight my eyes with on my fishing rambles !”—and Esdaile threw up his eyes in despair at the mischievous zeal of the experimentalist, which indeed bid fair to alter the whole feature of country where he possessed any right of property into mere tameness and nudity, as far as its former romantic charm was concerned. Happily, how-

ever, his meddlesome rashness could not extend its ravages beyond the manor of Blacktarn, which was situate on the further side of Buttermere to the northward, and therefore did not affect the features of beauty and romance that decorated either the Buttermere or Keswick district.

In fact, Mr. Lawton was one of those self-complacent, no less than indefatigable operators, that through thick and thin would proceed with what he termed "his own plans;" unable to understand (since all was "so well meant") how any one could be found to object to his efforts. Of such a character are all those quacks and empirics—those Katerfeltos—that in all ages have kept the wise in alarm as to the mischief of their pretended views of improvement, sometimes too seriously fraught with evil to permit their absurdity to be merely a subject of derision.

The redeeming virtue of the Katerfelto before us was his good-humour and hospitable feeling; and wrapped up as he was in self-complacency, the raillery of the merry Doctor passed by him "as the idle wind;" still, however, his self-love was glad to find itself flattered in the polite attention and air of interest evinced towards all that he propounded by Colonel Renmore. In fact, our hero's knowledge of character and the human heart—or, in other words, human weakness and vanity—ever

suggested that the way to ingratiate himself in a man's favour is to evince a supreme interest in whatever concerns him, or is regarded by him with feelings of pleasure or individual pride. It will not be matter of surprise, then, that Renmore was already a favourite with Mr. Lawton, who contrasted his quiet, easy, deferential, and polished style with the more boisterous manner—the “non-acquiescence” and banter of the Doctor,—very much in favour of the former. At the same time that Renmore was thus insensibly winning his way to the *heart* of the blind as good-humoured “experimentalist,” (for which he had doubtless his reasons,) he was in reality gaining also a complete ascendancy over his *mind*. He knew that there is no flattery so successful as that tacit commendation afforded by deference and a well dissembled desire to be informed in what pleases another, and that “other” a vain man! In fact, Renmore saw that in a little time, if it suited his convenience, he might, to use a common expression, “do anything he pleased” with the lord of Blacktarn.

“Pleasantest person I ever met; and the most sensible,” whispered Lawton to Howbiggen.

“Ugh!” replied the other in a suppressed growl; “I hope he has had nothing to make him *unpleasant*.”

Meantime our hero was “making his way” with

the fair heiress of Blacktarn as successfully as he had won it with her sage sire. The quickness of perception he possessed as to the tastes and turn of thought of others was only equalled by the ease with which he adapted himself to them. Hence, there were few who had been half an hour in his company that did not feel they knew him as well as if the acquaintance had been one of years. All distance of feeling was swept away, and confidence and friendship were at once inspired, not more by the frankness and cheerfulness of his manner than by the polite familiarity with which he entered on the topics of individual interest with those he addressed.

A style and bearing such as this, not only disarmed every suspicion, but flattered the vanity of all. And it received no small aid (as may be readily supposed) in winning its way in the instance of the softer sex, when strengthened by the graces of person and a handsome, expressive countenance. The polished insinuation of his address was dangerously aided by a most harmonious and well modulated voice; and further it may be added, that although with so many natural qualifications to render him acceptable to the fairer sex, these were set off to the highest advantage by a distinguished taste as regards dress, that was but a due accompaniment to

that air of breeding which he so eminently possessed.

No eye was so ready to detect the "impression" he had already made on the fair heiress of Blacktarn as that of Miss Howbiggen. More than once had she directed her glance at her fair friend, in order, now, to signify to her that it was time to leave the gentlemen by themselves, and withdraw to the drawing-room; but Laura was too much occupied, as it appeared, in the conversation in which she was engaged with our hero; when Miss Howbiggen proceeded at once to rise from her seat, which of course called the attention of Miss Lawton to the summons; and these fair persons forthwith took their leave of the room.

"Mr. Golefield and Routhmore not returned yet!" exclaimed the fair hostess as she rose. "I trust no accident has happened! It is very late—dinner over, and yet—no signs of them."

"Oh, I dare say," growled out Howbiggen, "they will find their way back by-and-by; or if our worthy dreamer" (meaning Golefield) "has tumbled into the meer while following his aerial fancy flights, why he has his friend Routhmore to pull him out again, and the accident will be of use as a lesson to him to take care and look before him, and not so much above him—ugh! umph! Earth, not air, is the element for men, unless you

except the Germans—ugh !—and they soar but awkwardly after all.”

“ You are indeed most kind in your wishes that our friend Mr. Golefield may profit even by an accident;—but *I* will be a little more charitable, and trust he has had no such salutary warning.” So spoke the good hostess, more benevolent than her brother, whose observation, however, excited a smile on the faces of his guests, during which, Miss Howbiggen and her fair companion had left the room.

As we, together with the reader, entirely sympathize with Miss Howbiggen in trusting that no untoward accident has occurred to keep our distinguished friends, “ the Genii of the Lake,” so long away from their engagement to dinner at her house, we can only hope to relieve our anxiety by seeking them out. In proceeding, then, upon this laudable duty, we shall set out with them on their way in the morning, as already mentioned, in companionship with the curate of Lorton, whom his esteemed friends, Golefield and Routhmore, were escorting for a short distance on his way back towards Lorton.

CHAPTER XX.

“ Well hast thou said, and holily disprais’d
These shapings of the unregenerate mind—
Bubbles that glitter as they rise and break
On vain philosophy’s aye-babbling spring.”

COLERIDGE.

“ To catch the contagion of joy, kindled by that sun of glory and those exulting heavens,—to bend the spirit’s ear in mingled charm and awe over what mystic harmonies respire through the diapason of earth, and wave, and azure air,—to stand rapt beneath that spell, dazzling as harmonious, and feel delightedly snatched away on its glad current of splendour and blessing from all sense of self and individual care,—to feel merged in the vast tide of bliss that revels around in the bloom of the material, no less than the exultation of the animal world,—to own existence itself a blessing, and fostered in all joy and brightness, in the simple feeling of

animal revel that inspires every living thing down to the mote that dances on green and golden wing in the slanting sun-ray,—to feel all this joy, and own myself but as a bright link in a chain of universal revel and harmony,—to hail in gratitude the supreme Source of all this bliss in the mighty maze of creation's beauty and splendour in which it is reflected,—to hail it in this mighty temple of Creation, where all nature swells the strain of its praise and adoration—this mighty fane whose pillars base them on the carpet of dædal earth, twined about with her flowers, and whose roof is the azure and golden-fretted vault of heaven, whose endurance is eternal as its artificer's, and whose limits are one with all space,—thus to feel—thus to contemplate — thus to harmonize and soothe the mind—thus to exalt the spirit, and view in his loveliest and sublimest form the mighty Author of all being—this is religion!—this is the true spirit of devotion with *me!* . . .”

And Golefield (for it was himself that spoke) paused as he looked round him on the scene of nature's rapture and glowing sunlight which had kindled this ecstasy within him, while his companions, Routhmore and Fenton, had stood smiling to hear him give expression to it in the words which we have just recited. On his returning to himself again from the spell which had bound

him, Routhmore was the first to greet him, as he observed—

“Come, come, my dear friend and enthusiast, is not a little of all this joyousness of devotion, this poetry of soul, to be sweetened with one thought too of the blessings of man in his social state? Had you been a mere dweller in the wood and wild, unreclaimed by social charities and ‘human bland converse,’ (as the bard says,) you might have spoken thus far *only*, in thankfulness to the Author of life, and the blessing of which it is sensible; but as a member of a social state, and intended by that same Author to occupy a social sphere, you should have added something too to your reflections that would have embraced this consideration. Not alone should you have expressed yourself glad to participate in the joy respired through all animal life, but further, that while bird, and beast, and creeping thing on earth, in air, or wave, are indeed sensible of bliss, yet Man, above them all, is sensible of it with a nobler feeling, and leading to loftier results than the mere sense of beatitude in such existence, however pleasurable! You should have expressed that in that ray which lights merely animal pleasure in the irrational world *I* am animated to deeds worthy a loftier spirit,—to deeds that may decorate human existence, promote the cause of intellectual and moral sway,—deeds that

may improve and exalt the social world around me, and testify the love and wisdom of the Creator in works worthy of the most exalted of those beings—namely, man, social and high aspiring man—which he has created.”

“True, Routhmore, true,” replied the enthusiast, with a benignant smile; “yet I am not sorry to have poured forth my heart in the unqualified terms of joy that I felt at the moment, since it has afforded me the benefit that your chaster monition and more appropriate considerations, as a member of a social state, ever supply. But in good sooth, however well I wish to my fellow-men,—my fellow-workers in the social hive,—yet have I felt so much bitterness in the realities of life, that I confess I am at times glad to fly from the recollection of them altogether, and forget myself in such a dream as I have now been enjoying. The enjoyment is a harmless one, at any rate,—is it not, Mr. Fenton?” he added, turning to the good curate of Lorton.

“Yes; it is a harmless, nay, a praiseworthy one,” replied Fenton, “since the spirit that kindled it was a love for the source of that happiness it rejoiced over. But as our friend Routhmore says, and I fancy,” he added, smiling and shaking his head, “he is a more just philosopher than even Golefield, because always speaking with a view to

the condition of his fellow-men, as weaned from mere natural impulse to the sway of artificial life and circumstance—yes, as Routhmore says, you should have added a new source of gratulation to your ‘beatific musings.’ You should have felt, as he observes, that the spark of ovation, caught from the brow of heaven’s light, through the world without, should but have kindled the flame of virtuous ambition within, for the sake of that Social System, and the lot of that Human Denizen, for which all these external blessings are poured forth. And yet more,” added the good and sincere divine, while now the attention of his two comrades were called in pleasing, no less than respectful attention to him, “it is for me to add a stage yet further in those high outpourings of heart which you began,” (he said, addressing Golefield,) “and which you extended,” (he continued, to Routhmore,)—“it is for me to add that the full sum of pleasure and worship which these glorious handiworks of heaven around inspire is yet to be made up in a still sublimer and more dread consideration,—it is for me and my sacred character to invite you to hear in those dread harmonies which so much entranced your dream, my friend,” he continued, addressing Golefield, “not only the ovation hymned to heaven for life and its blessing; not only the high challenge, again, to man to render himself by his

deeds worthier the Divine power that called him to life; but to hear also the dread and mystic note sounding 'Hereafter,' and calling the mind to shape all its hopes, its energies, and aspirations to the Eternal World of which it warns!"

So spoke, as it was meet he should, the good pastor, as he walked along, shrined in the ray of his own virtue and benignity, with two companions worthy of him. The "halo" of spiritual radiance that encompassed them all, made their path one of "glory" and mental beatitude! If the light over Golefield's wore colours more varied and ardent from the ray in which fancy illumined it,—if, again, the spark of zeal and virtuous energy shone bright, and clear, and vivid in Routhmore's,—yet they neither of them transcended the chaste and equable glow in which the good pastor's soul found cheerfulness and illumination, since in him, in particular, it was warmed with the constant thought of happiness and reward as promised by the sacred code of which he was the pure interpreter. And now they had walked on till they had reached the turning into the Lorton road, into which Routhmore and the good curate proceeded; but Golefield stopped to enjoy one more view of the lovely meer and its waters exulting in the sunlight. It seemed to him, as the breeze swelled them, that every sparkling wave as it rose

murmured forth its joy in that wide song of happiness echoed through all nature ; and so intently did he stand quaffing his soul's fill of the sublime joy afforded him, that he did not perceive the presence of a fair form that had approached with light step to the spot of his musings. She remained motionless as some lovely triumph of the sculptor's art, while she regarded him with a smile as he thus, for a moment further, pursued his fancies—

. . . “ And if all,” he proceeded, “ is so lovely here, extending as far as my mortal vision can scan,—if this visible world which reflects the Maker is so beautiful, how much more lovely must be the world in which we image his Spirit's dwelling to be ! Would I could penetrate that realm ! Would ! the curiosity could be gratified which I feel to see worlds on worlds of enhanced loveliness and lustre !—And a bliss like this is what men call by the cold, chill term, ‘ death ! ’ Heavens ! how does the language of Convention disguise and dim the most delightful thoughts, and anticipations the most glorious ! Where are to *me* the chill associations, the fearful, repelling, and gloomy thoughts, awakened in the sound of death ? If it means ‘ Not to be,’—why, then, in the very oblivion it is blessing, since it is peace ! but, if it is to awaken to new scenes, new glories, a new scope of existence

. . . oh ! well may I wish to realize in consciousness all my mind's eye now too dimly wanders over, led on to those bright heavens of its survey, from the beautiful sphere that here—even here, in this earthly realm—glows around me !”

And the enthusiast now stood gazing on vacancy as his spirit looked forth from his eyes, wildly and delightedly, on all the kaleidoscope that his fancy had, magic-like, summoned up to charm him. When at last, the spell being past, he returned with a sigh at its loss to earth and things earthly, and to a remembrance also that he had been in the companionship of Routhmore and the good curate. On looking round, however, for them, what was his surprise to behold, not them, but the fair form we have mentioned—a form which might almost persuade him he was still indulging the same fairy dream he had just roused himself from ; for none of the divine worlds which he had been calling up to bless his vision could have exhibited a much brighter or fairer shape than that of her who now stood before him. It was, in a word, the lovely Gertrude that now smiled in the face of the dreamer, scarcely yet, as it appeared to her, awakened from the spell of those bright illusions with which he had just been dazzled. The character of the benign and gentle-hearted bard and metaphysician was well known throughout the neighbourhood ;

and the humble peasant and rustic maiden met him and greeted him as a friend wherever he chanced to be. And so the salutation of Gertrude shaped it, as she extended her hand to the poet, who had offered his own in friendly greeting to her.

“I fear, Sir, I have disturbed you in your meditations,” she said, as she looked at him as scarcely a being of this world, with a regard of mingled veneration and esteem.

“No, indeed! or if you had awakened me from them, it would only be to call me from hearing the melodies of a ‘sweet-speaking’ vision to those I am now sensible of in a voice scarcely less sweet, and proceeding from a source scarcely less radiant. But whom is it the Beauty of Buttermere seeks in this devious track? for I find I have wandered away somewhat from the spot where my friends left me, one of which was the ‘good curate of Lorton,’—him whom I know you respect and esteem even as a daughter.”

“Indeed I should be but graceless if I did not. . . . But could you direct me to the path Mr. Fenton took? for he is the person I am looking for, and have come over the hill, as the shortest way to the Lorton road, to join him. You are aware, Sir, that he is kind enough often to let me go to see him at his curacy at Lorton; and to-day he had promised to take me over with him—indeed, he feels towards

me as though I were his own child ! And I confess I never was able to form a more kindly estimate as to parental feelings than that which I have learned to make as regards *him*."

"He is the father and friend indeed of us all !" replied Golefield, as he regarded the Beauty, whose cheek had for a moment lost its bloom of rosy light, and was shaded with a paler cast ; "but Gertrude has a kind parent, surely, of her own, and whose indulgence is no less due to her daughter's excellence of disposition than her feelings of pride must be flattered in boasting of a child so lovely !"

Gertrude's thoughts were least of all occupied with the compliment the kind-hearted poet paid her. She drooped her head and was silent ; or if her lip quivered as Golefield looked at her in expectation of a reply, it was because she felt both pain and embarrassment,—it was because she was willing to check the answer she was sorry perhaps to feel was in reality due ; and if it rose to her lip, it trembled there, and died away unuttered. But her silence spoke to the penetrating and sensitive person that regarded her,—that if Gertrude had not reason to feel as much indebted to her natural parent for kindness as to her adopted one, Fenton, it was in consequence of no dereliction on her own part of filial duty or affection. And now they had arrived at a spot where there

was a turning into the high-road from the point of view where Golefield had lately been indulging in his meditations. "It is difficult," he said, as he looked back for a moment, "to tear oneself from the sight of so much grandeur and beauty! Observe how the meer shews itself here with such increased charm, as glimpses of its liquid azure are afforded through the rich green foliage of the surround . . ."

But a yet more welcome prospect had presented itself to the sight of the fair person he addressed, to permit her to delay by the poet's side longer than to yield a hasty acquiescence in what he said. And she sprang forward now to meet her early friend and guide, the "good curate," whom at this moment she recognised, together with Routhmore, in the Lorton road, to the opening into which herself and Golefield had come, and whither Routhmore and Fenton had proceeded a little time past, while their companion had lingered behind to indulge in the prospect and the meditations it awakened. The salutation was indeed that of father and child, as Fenton answered her greeting in the words—"God bless you, my dear child! I seldom see you now. A week scarcely ever used to pass but you would ramble over the hills to see me."

"And willingly," she replied, "would I have come to pay my duty as I was accustomed, but

that a control, to which I am bound to submit, has discouraged me from gratifying my inclination. For never," she continued, "am I so happy as when I can snatch a holiday (as I may well call it) at my old home at Lorton."

Fenton understood, without rendering any question necessary, what was the control of which his former pupil spoke; nor was it difficult for him to comprehend why a person who, like her mother, was a proselyte of the dissenting "holder-forth" of the village, should discourage her daughter's visits to her old home under his roof. Accordingly, without appearing to notice the allusion conveyed in her answer to him, he bid her proceed to take her seat in the little equipage which a servant-lad had now drawn up to the road-side, and which had been in waiting for him at the turning of the road to Lorton. So, wishing his friends Routhmore and Golefield "good den," and thanking them for the pleasure of their companionship thus far, he drove on with his "fair child and pupil," as he used to term her, in reference to her earlier nurture under his own auspices, and was soon advanced on his way to his cure at Lorton.

To return to his late companions. "A superior girl that for her station in life," said Routhmore, with reference to the Beauty;—"superior both in mind and manner. I wonder what truth there is

in the surmise that the late Wetherby, the husband of the landlady of the Traveller's Rest, was not her father, but that she is the child of a person even as distinguished as the highest grade in society could render him? I asked Fenton how this was, one day, in consequence of hearing a remark of the Beauty's, which evinced at once a tone of mind and feeling rarely met with in the walks of lowly life, and the offspring of lowly parents, even where the benefit of education has been bestowed, as in her case."

"And he had no reply, had he, that could warrant any such surmise as you mention?"

"None in the world! though he acquiesced in my remark as to the superiority of her attributes; and said she was of as elevated a spirit as she was of propriety of feeling and goodness of disposition."

"She is naturally gifted in her qualifications of mind no less than person; hence these rumours about her parentage. It is a pity, however, that with a heart as buoyant in its native cheerfulness as her cheek is lovely,—with so much tender confidingness of disposition, and a spirit fresh as the mountain-dews her light feet brush away,—she should feel these happy qualities chilled somewhat by the ungenial demureness, and even austerity, of the dame, her mother."

"The good woman's demureness is easily ac-

counted for by the sanctimonious straight-lacing she has lately taken it into her head to adopt; and I dare say 'means' uncommonly 'well' towards a daughter whose beauty must render her an object of much notice, and, in her station of life, possibly subject her to some danger; except that she has too much good sense to have her head turned by compliment. The radiance of her pure, virtuous brow would confound the iniquity that should approach her, like Una's, in Spenser."

"Ay, and you may add, that the same good sense you speak of is not likely to permit her tastes to be readily won or pleased. She has had a good pattern of lofty virtue and mental superiority in the guardian of her earlier years, Fenton. His manners are plain and simple indeed, but his mind exalted and refined. . . . But where are we wandering? Surely we have taken the wrong path, and, bewildered in thinking of the charms, spiritual and personal, of the 'Beauty' of these wilds, have mistaken our way!"

"Indeed, so it should seem," replied Routhmore; "and if I recognise the spot aright whither we have strayed, it is to that desert haunt where you told me that old Mike . . . but, bless me, who are those two figures coming down the steep on the opposite side to this wilderness where we stand? See; they are descending by the rude, natural flight

of steps in the cliff-side. One of them, if I mistake not, should be old Mike himself, and the other——”

“The stranger whose appearance at church to-day excited our surmise as to who he could be, or whence he could come. . . . But let us stand aside; they see us . . . and observe, the stranger seems to hesitate whether he shall advance; but his guide, by his gestures, seems to beckon him onward.”

While Golefield uttered these words, himself and his companion placed themselves behind a huge mass of broken rock, with the fragments of which the whole haunt around was strewed; the heaps being here and there tufted with rude brier and wild grass; being the same spot where we remember old Mike to have risen, phantom-like, to the wondering eyes of our hero sometime ago.

“It is the spot,” resumed Golefield, “where the ‘ancient mariner’ makes his abode. The old man and I are friends; and it is not unfrequently I stroll alone to this weird habitation to bring him a trifling present, in the shape of some ‘creature comfort,’ and ask in return one of his strange tales for it.”

“I never heard one of them yet, and have a singular curiosity to do so,” said Routhmore.

“Oh, you shall hear. . . .”

But at this moment Golefield’s words were in-

terraptured, as he started at the sudden appearance of Mike himself; when, after a few moments' pause, he resumed—

“What, Mike, is it you? We were just speaking of you; and lo! like a spirit, you have heard our ‘invocation,’ and have risen to gratify us with a sight of yourself. My friend here was anxious to hear that strange tale that won my fancy so, and which I have longed to listen to again when you would vouchsafe to recite it to me.”

“Words—mere words!” ejaculated the old man; “to you at least,” he added, significantly, as he dropped his voice. “Mere sunshine,” he proceeded, “for your fancy’s disport!—mere hues of fable!—and he that tells you the tale accounted but a crazy, fond chronicler of dreams. . . .”

[. . . “Nay, nay, Mike,” interposed Golefield; while the old mariner proceeded to mutter to himself—]

“But there are some, I trow, who will know that these words are not mere sounds, nor the fears of Mike mere fable! . . . Well, gentlemen, what would ye in this abode of loneliness? . . . Ye have stumbled here on one who has little to offer you to yield it cheerfulness, when he tells you that, wilderness as it is, it is not so much so to him as is the world of heartlessness and regrets from which he seeks refuge in it. Those broken fragments

are not so forlorn as broken hearts and hopes!—those wayward heaps not more obstacles in our path than the contradictions that cross the track of life! That little flowret smiling on the top of yonder rock, what is it but the hope that must soon wither, and which relieves—but in mockery, and for a fleeting moment—the barrenness of destiny? . . . What would you with one who can say little more cheering than this?—whose poor thoughts are all he possesses to people this wild withal; and such as they are, little likely to win ye to tarry in its cheerless mazes with him!”

As the old man was speaking, both Golefield and Routhmore thought they heard a footstep pass rapidly from the spot in a contrary direction to that in which they were sitting; and it occurred to Golefield (who was better acquainted with the old man's subtle character than his comrade) that possibly he might have been seeking, in the words he had just uttered, to engage their attention in order to facilitate the withdrawal from the spot of the stranger in whose company they had lately seen him approach it. Such a conjecture was reasonable, since secrecy seemed to be the object of that person,—to judge, at least, by his early withdrawal from the church that morning, and his hesitation, not long ago, in proceeding down the cliff steps when he descried Golefield and his companion. Then,

again, it occurred to Golefield that possibly this person might have been shewn by old Mike to his cell already mentioned in the rock-side, and where Golefield had ere now visited the weird mariner ; accordingly, he resolved on proceeding to the cell, if Mike should offer no objection. Here he thought he should at length meet the venerable stranger that had excited his interest ; and with this view he shaped his reply to Mike's words—

“ Nay, Mike, these thoughts, which you say are all you possess to people this dreary waste withal, render it to me more cheering and of more interest than any scene of giddy stir or noisome din that life can offer. Nor deem that the words you utter are regarded by me as so much disport, and food for raillery at your expense. Not so ; they make me love and marvel at the man who has endured so much, and felt so deeply. . . . And this my friend here feels as I do.—”

Routhmore smiled and bowed assent, as Golefield continued—

“ So, what say you ? shall we to the cell ? ” . . .

“ Well, well,” said the old man ; “ be it as you will. You may think it a light task, haply, to me to recount the adventure or the peril my tales lead through.” And here Mike paused, and looked searchingly at them, when he resumed, in a manner as earnest and wild as it was sudden—“ The ship

that leaves her tranquil haven to encounter the buffets of wind and wave—the terror of the hurricane—launches not forth on a tempest more stormy than that which meets the spirit of the old mariner in recalling the memories you ask him to awaken. Would they could sleep!—but woe worth the day that gave them birth! Their regret is not more for the past than the future fear of which they portray the forewarnings.”

His two companions interchanged looks as they smiled at the old mariner’s characteristic superstition. Meantime he strode before them to the chasm in the rock-side where his cell was situate, casting, however, a glance in the direction where the footsteps had been heard by his present comrades to recede. All was vacant and silent : no human form was traceable—no step but their own awakened the echoes of the solitary haunt.

